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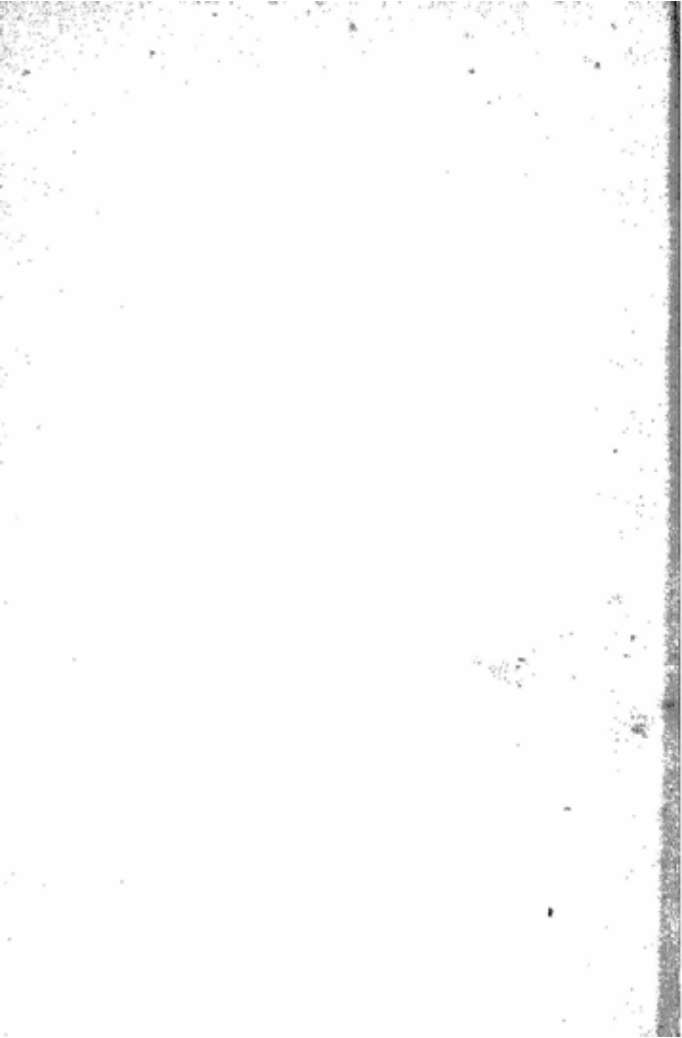
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THE LEGACY OF ASIA AND  
WESTERN MAN

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE SPIRIT OF ZEN

A WAY OF LIFE, WORK AND ART IN THE  
FAR EAST.

"I advise all students of the Dhamma to  
enlist the services of this most competent  
guide without delay."—*Buddhism in England.*

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# THE LEGACY OF ASIA AND WESTERN MAN

*A Study of the Middle Way*

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BY  
ALAN W. WATTS

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Ramakrishna R S/41 22.2.47



## NOTE

AS this book is rather *à propos* of than about the philosophy and religion of the East, I would especially direct the reader's attention to the Bibliography and Glossary at the end. The former is a comprehensive selection of the innumerable works on Vedanta, Buddhism, Taoism and Yoga published in English, French and German. This book is less a description of the information contained in these works than a guide to it, an account of certain principles which will make it more understandable to the Western mind. It might therefore be called a preface to books on the wisdom of Asia, while the Bibliography forms the contents list of the main work. Inevitably a study of Eastern religions involves the use of technical terms which can only be translated by a sentence or a paragraph in English. All the important terms used in this book are briefly defined in the Glossary, for though many of them are explained in the text, their constant recurrence requires a briefer definition easily to hand.

I must take this opportunity of thanking Mr. Cranmer-Byng, the publisher's reader, and Mr. Christmas Humphreys for giving many valuable comments and suggestions which have been of the greatest use. And

# NOTE

for help in a number of small but important ways I am indebted to Dr. Lionel Giles and Mr. John M. Watkins.

ALAN W. WATTS.

ROWAN TREE COTTAGE,

CHISLEHURST.

*Spring, 1937.*

## INTRODUCTION

IF this book had been written three hundred years ago, its title would have read like this: *The Religious and Philosophical Legacy of Central and Eastern Asia, considered in relation to the Spiritual Problems of Western Man—being a Study of the Middle Way as expressed in Buddhism, Taoism and Vedanta, together with an examination of its relations with Christianity and Modern Psychology*, and even that would have been a little inadequate. Convention, however, forces us to confine it to the shorter though less explicit form: *The Legacy of Asia and Western Man*. But this is not simply a book about Oriental Philosophy and Religion or those other, if less important, parts of Asia's legacy—her art, literature and law, except in so far as these bear directly on our subject. Already there is a large enough number of books on the wisdom of the East considered by itself, for the most part written by scholars and students of comparative religion.<sup>1</sup> In the last fifty years tremen-

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that in spite of their rather limited appeal, on Buddhism alone there are almost 2,000 books in English and at least twice that number in French and German. The number on other branches of Oriental philosophy—Vedanta, Yoga, Taoism, Confucianism, Sufism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Mohism and Tantra—has never been counted. Apart from those issued by well-known publishing houses, hundreds are published every year by societies and private individuals in Europe, America and Asia, a large proportion even of the Asiatic ones being written in English.

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dous progress has been made in Oriental studies, and thanks to the diligent labour of scholars a vast amount of information is now available. The scholar would be no scholar if he did not pay the most careful attention to details, and inevitably his pre-occupation with the trees obscures his vision of the wood. There are exceptions, but generally speaking before the public can make use of the fruit of research, there must come between the scholar and the world at large the interpreter. There exist already many interpreters of Eastern thought, presenting it in everyday language and in broad outlines so that it can be understood by those who have no taste for technicalities and trifling details. But beyond research and interpretation there is another important question. For having amassed and, in part, understood this wealth of information, we have to consider what relation it has with our own traditions, and what influence it can have on our own way of life.

So far, however, little has been done in this way. It is true that many have suggested that the wisdom of the East is so far superior to our own that we should at once discard Christianity (and even Science) and become Buddhists, Hindus or Theosophists. But this is as much beside the point as the suggestion that Asiatics should become Christians or Rationalists, for a world devoted to one particular religion would be as uninteresting as a diet of one particular food, however nourishing that food might be. Moreover, proselytism has this fault: that being unwilling to learn from others it lacks humility. Therefore the object of this book is

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less to describe Eastern thought and mysticism than to relate it to Christianity and to that young but swiftly growing science—Psychology. Further, the stress is laid not so much on the two things to be related as on the actual relationship. Every book is in some degree an expression of personal opinion, an account of personal experience, and in so far as this is true here it must be regarded as the view of life suggested through Eastern thought to one brought up in Western traditions. For those traditions he has deep respect, and though his respect for the traditions of Asia is equally deep, he is in no way tempted to "change his skin" and try to become Oriental. But respect for an alien culture need not be the respect one feels for a valiant enemy; it should be nearer to the regard which man feels for woman. He does not wish to become a woman, but through union with her he creates a child. Therefore this book is concerned with the possible child of Eastern and Western wisdom. As such it is written in the main for three kinds of people: for the sincere Christian who wishes his religion to mean more for him than it does already, for those seeking enlightenment in the new psychology of Freud, Jung and Adler, and for those Westerners who are so enthralled with the wisdom of the East that they neglect the wisdom of the West. All these three kinds of people, living as they are in the Twentieth Century, are likely to belong to one general type: the thoughtful person who feels uncertain of his roots, who has seen the replacement of Faith by Reason and has learnt the barrenness of Reason alone, whose

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head is satisfied but whose heart thirsts. He has much knowledge, much education, much power of intellect, but he finds that there is a gulf between what he thinks and what he feels and does.

Among psychologists there is one who has already begun to tackle this very problem, and that is Jung himself. Although he has confined his work to a rather specialized field, he is one of the first to approach the problem in the right way. In his commentary to *The Secret of the Golden Flower*<sup>1</sup> he has made a profound study of the advantages and dangers of the assimilation of Eastern thought by Europeans. In a comparatively short space he has put forward an extraordinary number of vital and suggestive ideas, and whether or no he will agree with the main conclusions of this book, it owes its inspiration to his work. For Jung opens up a way to the understanding of the East which does not involve breaking away from our own roots. He keeps carefully to scientific method in so far as he is never led away by the mere glamour of words, symbols and exotic doctrines which capture the faith of so many who have lost confidence in Christianity. For by approaching the Eastern wisdom neither as outworn superstition, nor as metaphysics, nor as a body of esoteric and inaccessible mysteries, but as psychology, he sees it as a natural growth of the soul which we of the West can develop

<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm and Jung, London, 1931. Translated by C. F. Baynes from *Das Geheimnis der Goldenen Blüte*, Munich, 1929. This is an old Chinese text of Buddhist and Taoist origin called *T'ai I Chin Hua Tsung Chih*.

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out of our own roots without any resort to imitation. The danger, according to Jung, is that we should imitate the high states of mind mentioned in Eastern philosophies, that we should try to add to ourselves artificially what we have not achieved by natural evolution. It is not for the West to copy the East, for to steal the prize of wisdom before it is earned can only lead us to confusion. In the words of a Chinese sage, "When the wrong man uses the right means, the right means work in the wrong way." Obviously it would be absurd for those who are still in some way attached to the world to pretend that they have attained consciousness of *Nirvana*. Fundamentally, however, Eastern philosophy applies to mankind in all stages of his evolution. For it is concerned not only with that final cycle of man's existence where he passes into the state of Supreme Enlightenment, but also with the cycle of those who, like ourselves, have still our debts to life, our responsibilities in the world of *maya*. There are many who imagine that in order to practise the wisdom of Asia it is necessary to retire from earthly activities, to sever all attachments and to wander away into solitude as a homeless *sanyassin*. But this is altogether a wrong impression, for if Eastern philosophy applied only to men in certain conditions it would have no claim to be universal. Indeed, if it necessarily involved the life of the *sanyassin* it could be of no use to the West whatever, for there can be no question of giving up earthly functions until they are completely fulfilled. While there is any fear of earthly life and its functions,

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of earning one's living, of marriage, of establishing a family, of making friends, they cannot be avoided with impunity. In the West we are by no means proficient in these arts, and before we can even dream of giving up the world we must have mastered them, for there is no short cut to *Nirvana*.

But to carry out the functions of the world with success, to be truly constructive and creative in this lower cycle of being, it is necessary that we should be reconciled to it. For unless we are as much in union with life as man is with woman, we can never produce any child. Now in the course of his evolution man must produce many children, and if the last of all is the Holy Child, the Saviour, the Bodhisattva, there are many lesser children to come before. Superficially, Eastern philosophy seems to be concerned only with the last, but the same principles of union and birth apply on every plane. For whatever our particular vocation in the world, it is essential that we embrace life whole-heartedly, that we accept it, that we give ourselves to it; otherwise nothing will come of it but frustration and mental disease. It is curious, however, that the very words we use in ordinary speech—embrace, accept, give ourselves to it—apply both to life and to the love of man and woman. For this is yet another illustration of the fact that certain principles apply in all places and to all activities alike. Eastern philosophy is, for the most part, the study of these principles and the technique of their application. If the superhuman heights of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Avatars are beyond

## INTRODUCTION

us, let us regard them as symbols of lesser achievements as well. And if it is not for us at present to attain that final union with the One Reality as described in the *Upanishads*, the *Gita* and the *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali, we can at least attain it in a lesser way in the ordinary affairs of the world. For is not this the meaning of the prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" ?

Like unto space the Tao knows no boundaries ;  
Yet it is right here with us ever retaining its serenity and  
fulness.

It is only when you seek it that you lose it.  
You cannot take hold of it, nor can you get rid of it ;  
While you can do neither, it goes on its own way.  
You remain silent and it speaks ; you speak and it is silent.

*Hsüan-chiao.*

To seek after the Tao is like turning round in circles to  
see one's own eyes. Those who understand this walk  
straight on.

*From a Notebook.*

## I. THE WISDOM OF ASIA

AS yet we have made use of only a small portion of the legacy left to us by the ancient world. We have turned our attention in the main to the heritage of Greece, Rome and Israel, and for hundreds of years a knowledge of the literature and arts of these three civilizations has been the essence of our education. It is probable, therefore, that one of the reasons for the increasing neglect of classical education is that we have now almost wholly absorbed this heritage, but it would be absurd to imagine that, because of this, we have nothing further to learn from antiquity. If a plant is to flourish, care must be taken that it does not exhaust all the goodness in its soil lest it should be forced to feed upon itself and so perish. From time to time it is necessary for the soil to be revitalized, and it seems that the time has come for fresh food to be given to the roots of Western civilization. Otherwise we shall try to nourish ourselves on our own indigenous culture, thus perishing before our time as it were through spiritual consumption. Our own culture is primarily scientific, and the growing tendency towards a purely utilitarian education is a sign that this consumption has already begun. There is no need, however, for us to perish so soon through lack of suitable food, for in recent years the enormous wealth of ancient India and China has become available. It was once customary to refer

## THE WISDOM OF ASIA

to these peoples as heathens, but increasing familiarity with their cultures should convince us that what they have to offer is unquestionably equal to all that ever came from Greece, Rome and Israel. If any doubt remained among reasonable people in the West as to the value of this legacy, the International Exhibition of Chinese Art which was held in London at the end of 1935 should have made them wonder at the attitude to life which inspired such inimitable beauty. Artistic achievements of this kind are astonishing enough in themselves, but there is something which for centuries Asia has valued higher than art, something which lay behind this art and which has been the main pre-occupation of Asiatic culture for almost three thousand years. That thing is, to use the most inclusive term, Wisdom, comprising religion, psychology and philosophy. The wisdom of Asia is the greatest portion of its legacy, and it is significant that all the great religious systems of the world had their origin in Asia, if we are to allow that the Semitic peoples are truly Asiatic in spirit. This, however, is open to question, for, apart from Sufism, the Near East produced nothing to approach the high level of mystical and psychological philosophy attained in India and China. Therefore for our purpose it will be sufficient to consider only the distinctly mystical religions of Asia—Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. The teachings of Confucius are primarily ethical, and in spite of their undoubted nobility they are more subject to changes of manner and custom than those which concern the aspect of man which

## THE ROOTS OF CHRISTENDOM

is constant in whatever time or of whatever race. Islam is so closely allied to the tradition of Israel that it offers little beyond what we already know, and however much we may admire the simplicity and evangelical power of its faith, it is so essentially a religion suited to the uncontemplative vitality of youth that it is unable to satisfy the more complex needs of maturity. Christianity, however, although of Semitic origin, has become an integral part of our own culture, and as such it is just as dangerous for it to feed on itself instead of an older tradition. During the Thirteenth Century, when Christianity reached a higher level than ever attained in subsequent times, it was nourished by Greek philosophy, principally of the school of Aristotle. In its earlier days it derived power from Neo-platonism, but now that these particular traditions are almost absorbed it must seek energy from other sources. The Reformation instituted a return to the source from which Christianity had sprung in its very earliest days, the tradition of Israel, and for many years Protestantism had a decidedly Old Testament flavour. But now even that is passing, and Christianity is left with three alternatives : to resurrect its own past by returning to Puritanism, Scholasticism or Gnosticism<sup>1</sup> ; to root itself in

<sup>1</sup> The term Puritanism as used here should be understood to embrace all those post-Reformation forms of Christianity which gave preponderance to the Jewish tradition, which saw Christianity as set forward in the New Testament simply as the fulfilment of the philosophy of the Old. It is an interesting fact, to which far too little study has been given, that almost every form of Protestantism gives far more emphasis to the Mosaic tradition than Catho-

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modern scientific thought; or to explore the entirely new field of the tradition of Asia. To take the first alternative would yield but poor results. Both the Old Testament and the philosophy of Aristotle have been so thoroughly absorbed and exhausted that Christianity would only be feeding on what has now become a part of itself. Gnosticism has now little to offer beyond a most involved and contradictory set of metaphysical systems which are little more than garbled versions of truths far better expressed in the Asiatic religions from which they were derived. Most of what was essential in Gnostic doctrines Christianity absorbed, and we find it in such ideas as the Trinity and in the Pauline conception of Christ as an inward, spiritual experience, known in Gnosticism as the Chrestos, or Christ-principle.

licism. The latter has a more thorough grasp of the significance of St. Paul's Epistles, in which he is at pains to emphasize that through Christ the Mosaic law is rendered obsolete. The term Gnosticism is here used in a far wider sense than usual—a sense which few Christian historians would be ready to allow. The term is generally applied to certain "heretical" sects which practised a form of Christianity strongly permeated by Neo-platonism and Oriental mysticism. The evidence of this permeation is so strong, however, especially in Catholic Christianity, that it would appear that all Early Christians were Gnostics in greater or lesser degree. Thus we understand the Gnostic period of Christianity to be that in which it absorbed Neo-platonic and Kabalistic thought, together with what was left of the tradition of the Mysteries. This, however, was by no means a full absorption of Asiatic mysticism, for in those days that particular mysticism was only available in Europe and the Near East in a peculiarly muddled and incoherent form.

## PSYCHOLOGY AS AN ART

Modern scientific thought, however, presents a different kind of problem. Certainly Christianity has not yet absorbed this, but the absorption would hardly be profitable, for science, as we know it, has little or no relation with what is important in religion. If we regard the essentials of religion as certain doctrines about the objective universe, then, perhaps, a relation between science and religion may be found. Fundamentally, however, religion is concerned with subjective values and intuitions which can no more be treated by science than colour can be described in terms of shape. All sciences with the one exception of psychology are concerned with the objective world, with the measurement of quantities, with the relationships between bodies which can be estimated in terms of feet, pounds, volts or wave-lengths. But if we define science as measurement in the widest sense of the word, psychology as applied to the cure of neurosis, to the adoption of a right attitude to life, can hardly be called a science. It is rather an art, almost a religion. A psychologist cannot be said to measure a "guilt-feeling" as a physician measures the beat of the pulse or the quantity of uric acid in the blood. In truth there is no science of psychological healing in the strict sense of the term, for no system can be evolved which can just be learnt from a book or a teacher and applied with success. The cure depends almost entirely on the person who applies it, and its effect can only be measured by the somewhat immeasurable thing which is called a man's happiness. A system of psychology corresponds almost exactly to the technique of an artist.

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Given sufficient knowledge almost anyone can diagnose blood-pressure by making physiological measurements, but no amount of mere knowledge can detect lack of beauty in a picture or lack of happiness in a human being. These things require an innate feeling for qualities, an intuitive faculty which no learning can give. Precisely the same faculty is necessary in religion, for no mere philosophical or metaphysical study can produce an appreciation of such personalities as the Buddha and the Christ. It can produce no love for man, no feeling of God, no sense of holiness. The objects of religious experience, as of æsthetic experience, can in no way be measured. It may be incorrect to call them objects at all, for strictly speaking they are subjects ; they are not things externally created or seen by man ; they are manifested through him, and he feels them because they come subjectively from his own divine nature.

Thus Christianity may learn from psychology, but it would be absurd for it to look to this alone for a new source of nourishment. In the West psychology is in its babyhood. As Jung once said, it was not even born yesterday ; it was only born this morning. Moreover, it is gradually evolving more or less independently ideas which have been known to the East for centuries. The philosophy of Freud is far more completely expressed in Tantra and the cult of Kali, while some of Jung's most important discoveries will be found in Vedanta, Buddhism and Taoism, to which he has frequently acknowledged his debt. The unique value of modern psychology is that it presents these conclusions in a form more easily adapt-

## A NEW INTERPRETATION

able to the West, though it is to be regretted that there is not sufficient knowledge of Tantra and the cult of Kali to enable us to see the very serious dangers of Freud's philosophy. We refer especially to his teaching of the goal of life as death, and death as re-entry in the womb of the mother—a philosophy which has been the excuse for some of the most depraved rites of India's "religious underworld." But if a satisfactory relation can be established between modern psychology and the wisdom of Asia, Christianity may find a source of energy which might produce a Christian renaissance as great, if not greater, than that of the Thirteenth Century. That is not to say that Christianity would simply imbibe these new teachings without making any fundamental alteration in its own. Although it is claimed by Catholics that the schoolmen, in turning to Aristotle, only amplified the Christian revelation, it is just such amplification which is really alteration. It is part of the Christian revelation that there is a God, that there is a Trinity, that there is a soul, but almost more important than one's belief in these things is one's conception of them. The Christian revelation is ignorant superstition or divine understanding according to the manner in which we conceive it, and it is our conception which is altered by the absorption of other philosophies. It would be splitting hairs to contend that this does not amount to an alteration in Christian doctrine. For the bare essentials of Christianity, the few revealed truths which compose its creed, are symbols into which we may read not just what we like but just what our spiritual development enables us

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to read. Thus we might say that although the present interpretation of those symbols adopted by Catholicism is true, it is not much of a truth. In just the same way we say that although a man is a man, he may not be much of a man. The difference may be of both quality and quantity, but the lesser contains the possibility of the greater.

We cannot, however, consider the future of Christianity unless it is related to the life of the West as a whole. It is a common fallacy to imagine that the West can cut adrift from its Christian roots, to regard Christianity as an outworn creed in no way suited to the development of a rational civilization. But it is precisely to preserve us from a rational civilization (in a special sense of that term) that a vital Christianity is necessary—a Christianity reinforced by all that Asia and modern psychology can give. To understand the danger of this particular type of "rationality" we must return to the beginning of modern history—the Renaissance—and to trace the growth of the attitude to life known as Humanism. The main characteristic of this attitude is its faith in the self-sufficiency of rational man—a faith which has dominated the history of Europe, and especially of Protestant Europe, ever since the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries. Of course, there are no abrupt beginnings of world movements; Humanism may be traced back farther than the Renaissance, and its rapid spread in those two centuries was only possible because for many years previously the ground had been in course of preparation. The Renaissance apparently marks the beginning of the

## THE WORSHIP OF MAN

spectacular development of rationality which has enabled this civilization to advance farther in five hundred years than the older civilizations advanced in two or three thousand. It has made possible the unparalleled feats of invention and organization which have given us the conceit that ours is the first truly progressive culture, and that there is no reason why it should not go forward indefinitely to greater and greater heights of supremacy over nature. We call the Renaissance the beginning, however, mainly for convenience, for the movement was already in progress when St. Thomas Aquinas resorted to reason for proof of the Church's revelation. But at this time we notice a marked change in the direction of men's interests; their eyes were turned from God to Man, hence the term Humanism, and they gave their attention in the main to that aspect of Man which is conscious and rational. Their attitude may be summed up in those words from *Hamlet* :

What a peece of worke is man, how noble in reason, how infinit in faculties, in form and moving, how expresse and admirable in action, how like an Angell in apprehension, how like a God !

Thus in art we see an emphasis on the beauty of the human form and in literature an absorption in human deeds and emotions. Men, as it were, fell in love with Man, until in time they imagined that the human understanding was so great that it could be sufficient to itself, that it could solve all problems and embrace all knowledge. The mediaevalist, however, was not interested in humanity as such. When he drew a Madonna he

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had in mind not so much the form of a woman and child as the divine truth of which the drawing was no more than a symbol. But the artists of the Renaissance were interested rather in the humanity of these divine beings, and when they painted the crucified Christ they were at pains to express human form and emotion—the Son of Man rather than the Son of God. The mediaevalist knew that the love of God could never be shown in any picture, and he was content with the symbol; he took little pains to evolve a correct likeness of the human form, for it did not interest him. At his best he loved God infinitely more than Man, and trusted in the providence of God rather than the exercise of his own reason. The contrast between these two attitudes is seen again in the drama. In mediaeval times the mystery play was concerned not with the hopes and passions of men, but with the re-enacting of the divine story of the Creation, the Fall, and the Birth and Passion of the Christ. The mystery play was in truth an extension of the symbolic rites of the Church, but in Shakespeare these mystical themes are set aside; here we have a complete map of the human soul in its most exalted and its most depraved aspects. For Humanism, “the proper study of mankind is man”—but, it should be added, conscious, rational man, for Humanism never embraced those aspects of the soul which modern psychology groups under the term “the Unconscious”—that part of us which is inseparably bound up with nature and with the divine. This is nowhere better illustrated than in the course of post-Renaissance philosophy. For Descartes, who is regarded

## NARCISSUS

as the father of rationalism, set out to build up a philosophy by reason from the very beginning. Starting from a complete doubt of all existence, he reasoned that if he was reasoning there must be a *he* that reasoned. This gave him his first principle—*cogito, ergo sum*—and from this he developed his whole system. An earlier example of his method may be found in St. Thomas, but he began with a revelation and sought to prove by reason, while Descartes began with nothing and relied on reason alone. In this the whole trend of Western philosophy has followed him until recent times ; it has sought to solve the mysteries of the universe purely by the exercise of human reason, imagining that all things can be grasped by the intellect. Thus in art, drama, literature, philosophy and science Humanism exalts Man as a fully conscious and self-sufficient being ; it is not even as near to nature as Scholasticism, for in all forms of nature it sees only the likeness of humanity. The rose is compared to a woman, the mountains to the soul's aspirations, and the ordering of the stars to human intelligence. The universe becomes Man's mirror, into which he gazes like Narcissus, adoring his own image.

In these old myths there is always an important moral, for Narcissus languished and died through the adoration of his own beauty. In the same way, Man will languish and die through adoration of his own reason, for unwittingly it will lead him to a state of exhaustion and self-contradiction, a state which was foreshadowed as early as the Reformation. In Calvinism we discern the beginnings of this self-defeat, for in the doctrine of

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Predestination, of determinism, is the logical end of pure reason. It is here that Humanism begins to crush humanity, for it gives preponderance to a principle which is but one half of true philosophy. For reason, in the sense in which it is used here, is the characteristic of intellect, the faculty which is at a loss unless it can understand life as conforming to certain fixed laws. The philosopher who relies on reason alone is not happy unless he can classify and arrange things, unless he can place his data in mental pigeon-holes so that he can know where to find them when he wants them ; otherwise he would be overwhelmed by a mass of details, each demanding individual attention. But life has an unfortunate perversity which philosophers find sadly disturbing, a perversity which is the cause of all the philosophical arguments which have filled and will continue to fill an alarming number of inconclusive volumes. It has been said that three-quarters of controversy is due to inadequate definition or understanding of terms. It would be more correct to say that it is due to life's unfortunate dislike of terms. Terms themselves are misleading enough when ill-defined, but the real difficulty is that the facts of life refuse to be termed ; they are so elusive and changeable that before they can be sufficiently described they have become different. It would not be so difficult if it were only that things are so very different from one another ; what aggravates the difficulty is that they are always becoming so very different from themselves. But even in making that convenient generalization we have fallen into the trap ;

## THE BOREDOM OF SOLOMON

we have termed the facts of life elusive and diverse, and at once they refuse the terms. For we are reminded of the old saw, *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*, and that is no idle saying. Yet while similar situations repeat themselves again and again under many different forms, and while all things have to conform to certain eternal and universal principles, we know that the understanding of such principles alone does not amount to an understanding of life. This is the limitation of reason and intellect. However thoroughly we may analyse the laws of the universe, however much we may try to impress upon nature the order of our own intellects, there is still something lacking, for we understand only the mechanics of life. In terms of principles life is a machine in which every event is determined, and to explain life in such terms is to explain it away. It is foolish to believe that things are explained when their causes are revealed; to imagine that the wind is no longer a mystery when we know that it is caused by changes in the temperature of the atmosphere is to try to deprive life of its wonder. But life is not deprived; the loss is suffered by our own souls, and to lose the sense of wonder is to take on the boredom of Solomon who declared that there is nothing new under the sun. Indeed, he found this life such a vanity that he devoted his old age to concubines and idolatry, until the Lord said, "I will rend the kingdom from Solomon."

For in philosophy there is a conflict between two principles. On the one hand there is life elusive, endlessly diverse, ever changing, ever becoming new,

## THE WISDOM OF ASIA

joyously free and refusing all definitions. On the other there is life eternally repeating itself, bound by iron laws and determined in its every movement. These two principles represent life and death respectively, yet however much we may desire to cast away the latter and embrace the former, we must remember that life is not possible without death. Both principles are true, for without liberty law is dead, and without law liberty would bring itself to confusion. And just as law sets bounds to liberty, death sets bounds to life ; both are essential to one another. Thus exclusive reliance upon reason is equivalent to an over-emphasis of the principle of law, and this involves its own contradiction. The Humanist would measure all things by the laws of Man's intellect, but, however wonderful this intellect, in itself it is no more than a mental machine, and through it all things seem mechanical. The Humanist looks in the mirror of life and beholds an order which reflects his own intellect. He sees all events as conditioned by previous causes and all causes by previous effects ; each event becomes inevitable, and by inference he assumes that this is true also of his own mind. For reason leads us inescapably to the conclusion that we have no free will ; it binds all things to law ; it claims that there is nothing which cannot be explained by reference to law. The determinist description of life is thus the description of a machine. We can claim no glory for any achievement ; we can deserve no blame for any failure. That is complete exhaustion. There is nothing more to be done ; everything has been explained, and as

## THE DANGER OF BEING RATIONAL

soon as mystery dies, life dies too. By trying to measure the universe by his own reason, Man imparts to it the limitations of that reason.

Herein lies the danger of the "rational civilization." For the purely rational ordering of life becomes a purely mechanized life. The complete planning of our existence required by Marxism and Fascism is nothing other than social determinism. Scientists are expected to find ways and means of evolving, through eugenics and other expedients, the perfectly planned human being. It is hoped that an operation on the brain of a criminal will cure his anti-social tendencies; perfect hygiene will destroy all possibility of disease; perfect economics all prospect of poverty; the scientific study of aesthetic reactions to colour and form will produce perfect art. If it went so far as to say that perfect medicine would abolish all chance of death, we might say that perfect planning would disperse all hope of life. That is certainly an extreme statement of the rationalist position, but it is the inevitable result of following Humanism to its extreme, even if the followers themselves do not desire such a barren existence. But there is no need to fear that Western civilization will ever come to that end. Not only will the suppressed irrational forces assert themselves (in an unpleasant manner if we do not forestall them), but already there is a widespread revolt against the Age of Reason, an interest in things beyond and greater than rational man. For Humanism has already shown its bankruptcy, even without going to its logical extreme. In art it reached the end in perfect realism—

## THE WISDOM OF ASIA

at least, what should have been its end. The various "futurist" schools are the logical result of that realism; they are in no sense a reform, for they demonstrate the victory of the machine. In realism we see the height of rational art, with its absorption in the accurate portrayal of rational man; in "futurism" is the inevitable result—Man's subjection to mechanics, for reason, by its very nature, is mechanical. Its processes are as unavoidably determined as the effect of one revolving cog-wheel on the other to which it is joined. Thus it is *par excellence* the faculty for ordering nature, for mastering the external world, for conducting the struggle for existence. Our grasp of it has made possible the present civilization, materially without any rival in history. But to master nature in the extreme, to control all things, to explain all things, is to defeat one's real purpose. The subjection of life to reason is the method of keeping oneself alive, and the animal uses a primitive form of reason when it outwits its prey or builds a nest. But a balance must be maintained between reason and unreason, for if all life is subject, there is nothing left on which to live. The complete planning of society must lead to a spiritual exhaustion and emptiness; it may give us all that could be desired of food, clothing, luxury and health, but the life is more than meat. Complete order must produce complete boredom, for Man's soul longs for the unpredictable and the mysterious.

The serious problems of life [writes Jung] are never fully solved. If it should for once appear that they are, this is the sign that something has been lost. The meaning and design of a problem seem

## THE UNCONSCIOUS

not to lie in its solution, but in our working at it incessantly. This alone preserves us from stultification and petrefaction.

Man knows little of himself if he takes into account only the conscious, reasoning aspect of his mind. For just as we are unconscious of the greater part of the body, so we are unconscious of the greater part of the psyche; and just as the body goes on its own way, forcing us to recognize its demands in spite of all our ingenuity, so the unknown depths of the mind must assert themselves to our confusion if we do not make provision for them. We feel nothing of the countless processes which effect the digestion and assimilation of our food, and yet they perform their work entirely without the direction of our reason. Unless we are physicians we are utterly unaware of the operations of our nerves, of the origins of the forces of sex, and the miraculously intricate system of the circulation. But these processes rule our lives to such an extent that it is absurd to imagine that we are masters of our bodies. For once we act in disregard of these unconscious forces they assert themselves in a sufficiently unpleasant manner to make us remember that they exist and must be respected. Indeed, we are only conscious of digestion, circulation, breathing and nervous response when these processes suffer from some disorder, when they make themselves felt as a result of our disregard. In the same way, there are countless mental systems and impulses which so rule our thoughts that in fact the belief in the supremacy of reason is a laughable conceit. The conscious "I" does not rule the mind, for although the "I" is allowed to

## THE WISDOM OF ASIA

assume that it is the willer and the thinker, it is scarcely ever aware that it acts in accordance with forces which pay little heed to the "reasonable" and the "intelligible." The "I," however, has a remarkable faculty for persuading itself that it is being rational when it obeys irrational impulses ; it has the most subtle expedients for justifying itself, for finding an explanation for all that it thinks and does. But the conscious "I" is but a small fraction of the whole man ; indeed, it is perhaps the most limited and fettered part of the soul. Certainly the will is free, but it is not the "I" that wills ; it is *willed* by the profounder aspect of the mind in which is to be found both the wildly irrational freedom of the satyr and the divine freedom of God. Here is the will, the director of life, the source of energy, of *libido*, while conscious reason is simply the tool, the *machine*, which it uses to carry out its desires. It must not be imagined, however, that this complete subjection of the conscious to the unconscious is a happy arrangement. In spite of the "I's" capacity for rationalizing unconscious impulses, there are times when unconscious demands are so strong that they conflict violently with all that the "I" understands as reasonable. Whereupon there occurs a splitting of the personality ; the conscious and rational part of man attempts to be a law to itself, with the result that it becomes only law ; it kills everything by its desire for order and perfection. On the other hand, the unconscious and irrational part, without the restraining influence of law, becomes so utterly unruly that in time it wrecks all that mere reason has achieved on its own. The one is

## WHEN LAW IS DISORDER

inflamed by the independence of the other, and the harmonious interaction of law and liberty is replaced by the extremes of tyranny and licence. Modern civilization offers an unusual example of this conflict—a conflict which, when it occurs in the individual, is regarded as a serious form of insanity known as schizophrenia. To some extent we suffer from a social schizophrenia, for in no other age have there been such extremes of scientific order and political organization, yet it is precisely our immense scientific knowledge which makes possible the most violent orgies of destruction, and it is just those nations which regiment and organize their people in the extreme that are most eager for war. Herein we see the truth of Lao Tzu's aphorism that when the laws are overmuch in evidence, thieves and robbers abound.

But even in this violent splitting of the personality, the conscious reason is not so free as it would believe. It is probable that its apparent freedom is only one of the devices of the unconscious for indulging its own liberty. For the unconscious is by no means at peace within itself, and its conflicting parts see in liberty an opportunity to fight. The reason is persuaded to join in this conflict; it is cajoled by one part to resist others; it is inflamed with a pride in itself which simply assists one unconscious impulse against another. The same may occur in the bodily realm, for here again there is conflict. There is an unconscious process which causes delight in the sensation of taste, and this may so capture the consciousness that serious harm is wrought on the process of digestion. But the conscious faculty is in

## THE WISDOM OF ASIA

some sense responsible for the conflict. Without its aid, the various unconscious processes would be unable to fight one another, and therefore we find that in forms of life where consciousness as we understand it is undeveloped there is little or no disharmony. The trouble is that consciousness is strong enough to make a conflict, but not strong enough to resist the persuasions of the various combatants. What is necessary, therefore, is not the subjection of the unconscious to the conscious, but, as it were, a treaty between the two. The terms of this treaty must be that all unconscious forces shall have liberty to fulfil themselves, provided that this does not involve the destruction of one another. Thus our task is to become conscious of the unconscious, not to put it in fetters, but to give fair recognition to all its demands. We must make no attempt to claim victory over it, for this would be trying to deprive it of its own essential value. A garden requires discipline, but it is understood that this discipline exists simply to give all the flowers and plants freedom to grow to their best.

Needless to say, this coming to terms with the unconscious is no easy task, especially in a civilization which for some five hundred years has been steeped in the philosophy of Humanism. It is just because of all that has happened in this period that we cannot return to the old method of saving the soul from disintegration. This method is the practice of Catholicism—a system which contains every device necessary for the fulfilment and control of unconscious impulses. In the symbolism of the Mass, the practice of confession and the story of

## THE PASSING OF BELIEF

Christ there is all that the unconscious requires, and to have faith in these doctrines is to have a peace of mind unknown to those who rely on reason alone. That, however, is well enough *if* one can have faith, but five centuries of Humanism has made a return to the Catholic Church impossible for all but the comparatively few. As Jung writes in his *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* :

People no longer feel themselves to be redeemed by the death of Christ ; they cannot believe—they cannot compel themselves to believe, however happy they may deem the man who has a belief. Sin has for them become something quite relative : what is evil for one, is good for the other. After all, why should not Buddha be in the right also ? (p. 268.)

This scepticism, however, does not alter the inherent value of Christianity ; the truth remains in its symbols, and what is necessary is not just a return to belief but an enquiry which will show just how and why those symbols are effective. To carry out this enquiry it is essential to consider the religious legacy of Asia, because here we find a fuller and profounder treatment of the same symbols, with this difference : that the Eastern doctrines are confessedly psychological rather than theological. That is to say, their intention is not to provide a satisfying explanation of the world and a theological sanction for morality ; they exist simply to provide a technique for the soul's enlightenment. Buddhism in particular claims not to be a revelation, but the result of countless experiments, the sum total of centuries of experience. The Buddha did not come to earth with a wisdom which had been his from all eternity ; accord-

## THE WISDOM OF ASIA

ing to his own account as recorded in the Jataka Tales, he acquired it through innumerable lives of patient effort. Thus he offers his disciples a technique of spiritual development rather than a set of doctrines to be believed as if belief were the chief thing necessary for salvation. Christianity offers salvation through acceptance of a historical event—the Passion of Christ, and the difficulty is that when man doubts its historicity, he doubts also its power to save. But the Passion is actually the story of the spiritual adventure which is necessary to every man's salvation. To us, its value is not so much that it once happened, but that we can make it happen again and again. Thus the "revelation" of the Church can be seen less as an account of certain historical events, than as an allegory of the soul's development. Salvation can be obtained not simply by believing in and relying on the efficacy of things which actually happened, but by re-enacting them in our own lives. Hence the importance to us of the Asiatic religions is that they place little or no trust in historical events, and precisely through their very full descriptions of spiritual technique we are enabled to understand the Christian allegory in a new and more satisfactory way.

For the West, however, the approach to Eastern philosophy is encumbered with many difficulties created both by our own lack of understanding and the Eastern habit of speaking in paradoxes so alien to our own ways of thinking. The wisdom of Asia has only been studied at all seriously within the last fifty years, and much of this study has been undertaken by missionaries who

## EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION

approached the subject with anything but sympathy. On the other hand, many students have been mere scholars whose interest in the letter dimmed their perception of the spirit. Certainly we owe a great debt to their work, but it is seldom that the scholarly mind is able to interpret. It can give us the facts, but seldom their meaning, for only too often it is the purely analytic mind which is unable to see the wood for the trees. Above all it is that strictly logic-bound mentality which is unable to appreciate the subtle flights of intuition which mark all Eastern mysticism. For the Oriental philosopher pays little attention to the rules of philosophy as we understand them ; he seldom troubles to offer logical proof of his conclusions ; he seldom reasons out his thesis from a fundamental postulate in the manner of Descartes. On the contrary, the only proof he offers is the proof of experience ; he says in effect, " Put my conclusions into practice and prove them by the results which this has on your life." In this it is similar to psychotherapy, which has never sought to prove the existence of the Unconscious as theologians and philosophers have tried to prove the existence of God and the soul. The unconscious is confessedly no more than a working hypothesis ; its reality has been assumed simply because the assumption has been effective in the treatment of patients. There is little foundation for belief in the unconscious in physiological psychology, unless we take it to mean no more than the involuntary response of the mind to certain circumstances. But the unconscious as understood by Freud and Jung means far more than this ; it is the

## THE WISDOM OF ASIA

receptacle of all that has been seen, felt, thought—and forgotten, not only in the life of the individual, but also, as Jung insists, of the whole race. More than this, it is the source of that energy which shapes our lives—an energy far older than man—which is the *libido* or, in ordinary speech, desire. This is in many ways similar to the Buddha's doctrine that all desire (*trishna*) arises from ignorance (*avidya*) or lack of knowledge; the desire which causes us to be born into the world, which drives us along the road of our destiny whether we consciously wish it or not, proceeds from that part of ourselves which we do not know. The Buddha taught that this desire could be controlled by the conquest of *avidya*, that through self-knowledge we could master our destinies. Psychotherapy, in effect, brings forward a similar teaching: if we can make conscious what is unconscious we can make an end of mental disease. Thus we find a close resemblance between the Buddhist and Vedantist concept of *avidya* and the unconsciousness of psychology, though the term "the Unconscious" signifies the something of which we are ignorant rather than ignorance itself. Neither of these systems, however, requires any theology. It is not necessary for the Buddhist or the *yogi* in search of self-knowledge or the psychologist in search of the unconscious to have any belief in the saving power of a historical event or in the existence of a particular universal scheme. He requires no more than the facts of life as he knows them and the knowledge of a technique which can reveal further facts. He travels by himself into the unknown, for those who have gone

## OUR SUPREMACY IN LOGIC

before can find no language to describe what they have found. They can only offer guidance on the journey ; the traveller must undertake the journey for himself, and experience for himself what lies at its end. Thus until he has reached that end he must regard all theories of the universe, all metaphysics, all theology as hypothetical and unproved ; the proof is only to be found in experiment and even then it can only give satisfaction to the experimenter himself.

For this reason the philosophies of the East indicate rather than explain ; from the European point of view their metaphysics are poor and their reasoning uncertain. But they would be of little value to us if they offered merely a repetition of the methods of Western philosophers. In logic the West is supreme ; in Plato, Descartes, Kant, Hegel and the other " classical " philosophers of Europe we have the greatest masters of reason known to history. If life could be managed entirely by the exercise of reason we should have all that we require. But however intellectually convinced one may be of a certain philosophy, this conviction is often enough strangely remote from the serious problems of our lives, for the satisfaction of the intellect does not necessarily involve the satisfaction of emotion, feeling and intuition. It is therefore necessary to find a more catholic philosophy, a philosophy which applies to the whole of man instead of to but one of his parts.

If the wisdom of Asia seems strange to our reason, if it seems poor as philosophy, it is beyond question the most catholic of all psychologies. It may appear absurd

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to speak of the wisdom of Asia as a unity, seeing that the religions of the East comprise a vast number of different sects and schools. There are the six systems of Indian philosophy, the five schools of *yoga*, the two "vehicles" of Buddhism with their innumerable subdivisions, and the two philosophies of China (which seem as far apart as black and white) to mention only a few of the more important groups. But, apart from the fact that these systems have certain common elements, we of the West are able to approach them as a whole. Coming from afar we are able to see what is invisible (or rather, what is not often recognized) near at hand. Even if Eastern philosophers do not understand (though some are well aware of it) that their hundreds of different schools form a living organism, a unity in diversity, the West can appreciate that Asia offers us "ways to the One as many as the lives of men." This unity is only possible because it offers us *ways* as distinct from *creeds*; it offers a variety of techniques suited to the many different types of mind, ranging from the advanced psychism of Tantra to the practical mysticism of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Creeds there are as well, complex metaphysical doctrines over which pandits have argued without end, but the true wisdom of Asia does not lie in these. The theologies of Brahmanism and Mahayana Buddhism are regarded in all the important texts as subordinate to the practical technique of spiritual development, and they insist not that a man should believe in a set of theological propositions but that he should tread a path. These philosophies are nothing if they are not *ways* rather than *creeds*, for they

## WAYS AND NOT CREEDS

never tire of stating that their deepest truths are unintelligible to those who have not attained such an exalted state of understanding that those truths are less believed than *known*. So far as "ultimate realities" are concerned, the religions of Asia require not faith but knowledge; faith is only required in the technique for attaining that knowledge. More than this, even if Asia herself does not always recognize it, faith is not asked for any particular technique, for her religions offer a variety of ways leading to the same Goal—ways which are adapted to the varying capacities and talents of mankind. It matters little which technique is chosen, provided that, when chosen, it is followed with unswerving loyalty, for no one is entitled to say that his technique is useless until he has given it fair trial.

So far as the religions of Asia as a whole are concerned this catholicity can hardly be called intentional. The pandits of Vedanta, Buddhism and Taoism did not meet together and arrange to construct an organic philosophy. On the contrary, they frequently sought to exalt their own religions over others, but the organism grew in spite of their efforts. The reason for this was that the two greatest religions, Vedanta and Buddhism, were organic in themselves. Vedanta and its developments, which are contained in the inclusive term "Hinduism," consciously made provision for varying mentalities, while Buddhism adapted itself to the peoples amongst whom it spread. As an example of the former we may cite the different forms of *yoga*, all of which are recognized in India as equally effective. For the intellectual type there

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is *Gnana yoga*, the way of thought ; for the feeling type there is *Bhakti yoga*, the way of love ; for the worker there is *Karma yoga*, the way of service. But for those exceptionally gifted, there is a fourth which comprises the other three—*Raja yoga*, the royal way, and this contains not only the trinity of thought, love and service, but also that mainly psychic form of *yoga* known as *Hatha*. For Westerners, unaided by an experienced teacher, this last is an extremely dangerous practice, and it is to be regretted that many irresponsible writers have made a knowledge of its methods too easily available. It releases energies too strong for untrained nerves, burning them as a powerful electric current burns a weak wire. Moreover, so great are the powers which it develops that they are only safe in the hands of those of the highest moral discipline, those who can be trusted to use them without thought of personal gain.

Thus Hinduism provides for the occultist and for the three types of mystic, and not only does it offer different paths for different men ; in addition it recognizes three different vocations, all of which are equally necessary to the life of each individual. Some form of *yoga* or spiritual exercise is not the only object worthy of pursuit, for being gifted with faculties other than spiritual it is our responsibility to use them well. Hence three vocations, or functions, pertaining to the different periods of man's life are given equal recognition, and these are *Artha*, *Kama* and *Dharma*. "In youth and maturity," writes Vatsyayana, "man busies himself with *Artha* and *Kama*, and in old age he follows *Dharma*, striving thus to

## THE STAGES OF LIFE IN MANU

attain *Moksha*, the deliverance from further re-birth." *Artha* comprises the duties of citizenship, of acquiring a profession or trade, of making friends and establishing a family. *Kama* is the right use of the senses, the technique of sexual enjoyment and of all forms of pleasure natural to man. *Dharma* is the fulfilment of spiritual duties, the study of the scriptures and the practice of *yoga*.

Thus [says Vatsyayana] a man who practises *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kama* tastes at the same time fortune in this world and in the world to come. . . . Each act which conduces to the practice of *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kama* together, or of two of them, or even of one, that act should be performed ; but one must avoid an act which conduces to the practice of one alone at the expense of the other two.<sup>1</sup>

Hinduism, therefore, is perhaps the most catholic of all religions, for it has not become so in the course of its evolution but was based on the principle of catholicity from its very beginnings. Those who laid down the code of Manu made provision both for different mentalities and different vocations in the most thoroughgoing manner ; they showed an understanding of the social organism which in subsequent times has seldom been equalled, and it is probable that the peculiar missionary methods of Buddhism were strongly influenced by the social ideals of its native land.

For among missionary religions Buddhism is unique

<sup>1</sup> A fuller treatment of this subject will be found in the first section of Vatsyayana's *Kama Sutra*, from which the two passages above are quoted. The fullest treatment is, of course, in the 2nd to 6th books of the Laws of Manu, upon which Vatsyayana has based his observations.

## THE WISDOM OF ASIA

in that it is almost entirely free from the desire to eradicate the indigenous faiths and cultures of the peoples to whom it spreads. When it took root in China, instead of trying to impose Indian ways of thought upon people of a very different temperament, it skilfully adapted itself to the Chinese mind. Its founder had always counselled a respect for the opinions of others, and when in China it came into contact with Confucianism and Taoism it soon adapted itself to these native philosophies, producing a way of life which was the "Chinese synthesis" of the three religions. From time to time it was strongly resisted by hostile Emperors, but because of its unusual method of propaganda it succeeded where a more self-assertive method would have failed. Mahayana Buddhism as taught by the Indians was a highly involved and speculative system of metaphysics far removed from the practical tendencies of the Chinese. But not long after its introduction, these Indian characteristics began to disappear. Instead of keeping Sanskrit as the official language of Buddhism as for many centuries the Christian Church kept Latin, every assistance was given to the great scholar-pilgrim Hiuen-tsang to translate the Sanskrit *sutras* into Chinese. Hence before long a peculiarly Chinese form of Buddhism arose which combined with Buddhism certain aspects of Taoism and Confucianism. This was known as *Ch'an* (Japanese, *Zen*), a product of Southern China which in years to come was to have the most profound influence on Chinese ideals and especially on the art of the T'ang and Sung Dynasties. If in India Buddhism had fallen away from the practical spirit

## THE CATHOLICITY OF BUDDHISM

of its founder, the Chinese brought this spirit back to life in the most intense form. For in Zen they brought together the Buddhist's tremendous will for Enlightenment and his detachment from all changing things, the Taoist's reverence for nature and his understanding of the value of rhythm and change, and the Confucian's respect for ceremony and social order. But it is said that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and it is certain that Zen was not merely the adding together of these several virtues. It was as if a number of chemical ingredients had been mixed to produce something altogether new and unique, for in Zen there was a spirit which had not previously existed in either of the three faiths alone. It was something as mighty as a gale and as impossible to grasp in the hands of logic, something so one-pointed in its quest for Enlightenment that its rough treatment of mere doctrines and intellectual formulae was almost alarming.

Zen, however incomprehensible to Western thought, is the essentially Chinese form of Buddhism, and its ascendancy from the Eighth to the Twelfth Centuries coincided with the Golden Age of Chinese Art. But China is now long past its meridian and Zen has given way to corrupt forms of religion in which are little more than the shadows of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. Even so, the three still exist side by side, and it is said that people go to the Taoists for reading the destiny of new-born children, to the Confucians for a blessing on marriage and for rules for the conduct of life, and to the Buddhists for the burial of the dead.

## THE WISDOM OF ASIA

But in Japan Buddhism lives on in vital form, and here again there has been an adaptation to native culture. Zen became the religion of the warriors and artists, and was soon brought into an intimate relation with the Japanese love of nature. The indigenous cult of Shinto was enabled to exist together with Buddhism, partly through the ingenious process of identifying the various Shinto deities with the various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. From this there arose a curious cross between Shinto and Buddhism known as *Ryobu Shinto* in which the rites and symbols of both religions were merged together. For Shinto is an essentially national religion ; it could not apply to any other country than Japan, and thus it is possible for millions of Japanese to be Shintoists as Japanese and Buddhists as human beings. In all matters affecting the nation as such they observe the rites of Shinto, but in those which affect all men alike—birth, suffering, love, death—they are Buddhists.

These, however, are only a few of the countless ways in which Buddhism has given fresh life and meaning to cultures different from its own. In the 2,500 years of its history it has expressed itself in forms corresponding to almost every general type of mind, and at the same time it has preserved a unity. Never has there been a Buddhist religious war in any way equal to the Wars of Religion between Catholic and Protestant in Sixteenth-Century Europe, and this may be attributed in part to the Buddhist vision of universal salvation. Men may hold foolish opinions, but in the course of many rebirths they will eventually learn from their own mistakes and

## SPITTING AT THE HEAVENS

follow the true way. In the meantime, nothing can force them, and a man learns more from the natural results of his own follies than from the interference of others. This attitude has its disadvantages, and it may be said that whereas the strife between the sects of Christianity is a sign of life and health, the easy-going tolerance of Buddhism results in an aimless and unending differentiation like the decomposition of a corpse. The metaphor would be peculiarly apt were it not for such noteworthy memorials of greatness and life as the art of China and Japan, and the records in the literature of almost every people in Central and Eastern Asia of the lives of the Buddhist sages. Certainly we do not find much evidence in Asia of material improvement, of general education, of health and prosperity among the masses of the people, and for this reason it is often said that its religions are a failure. But it is absurd to compare civilizations to each other's disadvantage in this way, for such forms of condemnation are like the boomerang. Or, as the Buddha said, "It is as a man who looks up and spits at heaven; the spittle does not soil the heaven, but comes back and defiles his own person." For it must be remembered not only that the East is old and that the glorious days of India and China have, as must all things on this earth, passed away, but also that it is a mistake to judge it by our own standards of greatness. The achievement of Asia is its spiritual understanding and its art, and if these have had little effect on the lives of the masses, let us remember that the scientific creations of Europe are used for peculiarly hideous forms of self-destruction,

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and that its high standard of living and universal "education" have given ignorant people unheard-of opportunities for vulgarity. We are proud enough of the way in which we fatten our people, but we must not be surprised if the Asiatic remarks that pigs also are fattened for the slaughter-house. His remark might not be altogether just, but neither are similar accusations against Asia. There is no profit, however, in mutual disparagement, for it blinds us to the fact that Asia's gift to us is now at our feet, and that it would be madness simply to relegate this untold wealth to museums and the libraries of learned societies. It is true that the days of the old and wise Asia are past, but Greece, Rome and Israel vanished centuries ago and yet we have since that time reaped countless benefits from their remains.

But it is said that we can learn little from the East that we do not already know, and moreover that its wisdom is so cold and impersonal that it is utterly unsuited to the Western temperament. It is said to be the "wisdom" of those who did not understand the meaning and value of personality, of a people crushed by poverty and tyranny to a dull uniformity, and overawed by vast natural forces which made man seem as nothing. Again the accusation invites the Easterner to observe, in response, that we are so vain that we have made the whole universe our looking-glass, even to the extent of making God in our own image. But both observations, apart from being not strictly true, neglect the obvious necessity of relating the two attitudes in such a way that the personal and the universal are seen in their right propor-

## THE PARADOX OF IMPERSONALITY

tions. There can be no doubt that in some ways the philosophies of India are radically impersonal and, to our ideas, cold and vast like the lifeless infinities of space. To a superficial understanding they naturally imply that the world and all its beauties, horrors, pleasures, pains, virtues and vices is *maya*—illusion ; personality is a dream born of ignorance ; to the wise, all differentiation is the mind's distorted view of the One Reality, and man's task is so to unify himself with the One that personality vanishes and the limited self becomes the universal Self. But by one of those curious paradoxes which attend all spiritual life, the men who followed this way, so far from becoming nonentities, grew into personalities of the highest form. Perhaps the Chinese had a clearer understanding of this paradox, for in Taoism and Zen we find the cult of impersonality side by side with a profound appreciation of things momentary and personal. For in answer to questions about ultimate realities the Zen masters, instead of giving philosophical discourses in the Indian manner, pointed to a clump of bamboos, a flock of wild geese on the wing, or a sack of rice. Long before Indian philosophy had been heard of in China Lao Tzu said : "The Sage keeps himself behind and he is in front ; he forgets himself and he is preserved. Is it not because he is not self-interested that his self-interest is established ?" Here was the paradox of impersonality and personality developing together, and in an old Zen saying we find it stated in another way :

To a man who knows nothing of Buddhism, mountains are mountains, waters are waters, and trees are trees. But when he

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has read the scriptures and knows a little of Buddhism, mountains are no longer mountains, waters no longer waters, and trees no longer trees [i.e. they are *maya* or illusion]. But when he has thoroughly understood Buddhism, mountains are once again mountains, waters are waters, and trees are trees.

Whatever the precise meaning of these words, the difference from the accepted trend of Indian philosophy is obvious. But though it may seem that the Indians were content with the second stage, and seldom passed on to the third, this is only partially true, for there were some who understood more deeply. Thus this third stage, although not expressly stated, is at least implied in two of the Mahayana *sutras*—the *Lankavatara* and the *Vimalakirti*—and even in the Upanishads. What is important to note, however, is that as Indian philosophy developed through Buddhism, the division between the world of reality and the world of illusion, *Nirvana* and *Samsara*, became less absolute. This change did not take place in Buddhism of the Hinayana or Southern School, which claims to contain no more and no less than the original teaching of the Buddha—a claim upon which recent research has thrown considerable doubt.<sup>1</sup> The trend of Hinayana is to deny utterly the world of form, to see in all earthly beauty a sensual snare, to look forward only

<sup>1</sup> We refer to the work of Mrs. C. A. F. Rhys Davids. In spite of some of her rather extravagant conclusions, she has done most valuable research in showing the disparities in the Pali Canon between the authentic words of the Buddha and the dull interpolations of monkish commentators. See her *Outlines of Buddhism*, London, 1934; *Manual of Buddhism*, 1932, and all recent works, including revisions of books published before the War.

## THE DENIAL OF LIFE

to escape from life and death—an escape to be achieved in the quickest possible manner. To the Hinayanist, life is misery and all its forms, whether beautiful or ugly, good or evil, he rejects as equally vain.

The well-taught disciple feels disgust for body, feels disgust for feeling, feels disgust for perception, for the activities, feels disgust for consciousness. So feeling disgust he is repelled; being repelled he is freed. . . . So that he knows, "Destroyed is rebirth; lived is the righteous life; done is my task; for life in terms like these there is no hereafter."<sup>1</sup>

Here is the doctrine of *maya* in its extreme, and similar passages, drawn out in monotonous and repetitive form, abound in the Pali Canon—the scriptures of Hinayana Buddhism. The tragedy is that until comparatively recently such doctrines as these were presented to the West as orthodox Buddhism. Scholars began by concentrating on the Pali scriptures, and it was not until later that the Sanskrit texts of the Mahayana were given publicity. But even here they found persistent reference to the emptiness and vanity of the world, and it seemed as if Mahayana were only a metaphysical version of Hinayana.

Yet there was a difference, and in Mahayana the trend of Indian philosophy underwent a subtle change. For there came into being the sublime conception of the Bodhisattva—the sage who sought Enlightenment, not for his own peace and salvation, but for the welfare of all sentient beings. "Never will I seek or receive private,

<sup>1</sup> *Vinaya Pitaka*, i. 6, and *Samyutta Nikaya*, iii. 66 et seq. Trans. F. L. Woodward.

## THE WISDOM OF ASIA

individual salvation ; never will I enter into final peace alone ; but forever, and everywhere, will I live and strive for the redemption of every creature throughout the world." Such was the Bodhisattva's vow, and in it we see, not the desire to escape from the world, but its fullest acceptance. For the Bodhisattva identifies himself with all that lives ; he accepts responsibility for every single creature, and instead of trying to be delivered from the world of life and death he enters into it, knowing that there can be no peace for himself until the world, too, has peace.<sup>1</sup> Thus in Mahayana there is little mention of "disgust" for the things of this world ; on the contrary, we find it said that all things are potential Buddhas and should be treated as such. Furthermore, if we could only realize it, we should know that at this moment

This very earth is the Lotus Land of Purity,  
And this body is the body of Buddha.

This was the logical result of the ancient teaching of the *Upanishads* that all individual forms are appearances of the Divine Self. By this the world of form was given divinity, and the emphasis was shifted from the illusoriness of the form to the Reality which it contained. *Nirvana* and *Samsara* were shown to be in truth one and the same, the only barrier between them being our own ignorance. But the implications of this teaching do not end here, for the Mahayanist philosophers set themselves to understand the whole psychology of the attitude to life which it involved, and in China we find this

<sup>1</sup> See Chap. V for further treatment of the Bodhisattva ideal.

## THE MIDDLE WAY NOT COMPROMISE

intensely subtle and complex psychology transformed into a practical way of living.

A study of this evolution of thought will show that our impression of the Eastern wisdom as a merely impersonal and world-denying philosophy is no more than superficial. This is not to say that it does not contain a strong element of the impersonal, but apart from important modifications of that element in its higher forms, this impersonality might well be a useful counterbalance to the excesses of Western Humanism. For the principle by which all problems are understood, including the problems of Eastern philosophy, the principle which is at the root of all creative thought and action, is contained in the Buddhist doctrine of the Middle Way. This is not exclusively a Buddhist doctrine, for though it is given especial emphasis in that religion and also in Taoism, it is found in somewhat lesser degree in many other systems. The Middle Way must be carefully distinguished from mere compromise or moderation; it is not so much that which is between extremes as that which is born of their union, as the child is born of man and woman. Hence it is this principle which we must consult in relating all the pairs of opposites. By means of it we are able to be at peace with life and death, to recognize alike the demands of conscious and unconscious, to harmonize reason and nature, law and liberty, West and East. In this sense, the Middle Way is the first principle of life, for all that is born proceeds from the union of two opposites, just as in the myth the world was created through Water and the Spirit, the symbols

## THE WISDOM OF ASIA

of matter and energy. At heart, the wisdom of Asia is the application of this principle to the spiritual life of man. For the problem which the sages of the East endeavoured to solve in so great a variety of ways comes eventually to this: If man and woman together create a child, what is That which we must create from the opposites of life and death, subject and object, mind and form—and how is it to be done? Disharmony comes through failure to create, through the opposites being in confusion. Therefore Asia sought the One which proceeds from the union of man and the universe, the self and the "non-self," that through life he might create instead of being at enmity with the world. Thus, if it is true that we of the West are ill at ease because of the conflict of our reason with nature in ourselves and around us, and if we suffer because we have isolated rational and conscious man and set him at war with life, then we have much to learn from Asia's legacy of the Middle Way.

## II. THE FRUIT OF THE TREE

HOWEVER shallow we may find the interpretations which the Catholic Church has placed upon its ancient symbols, it would be the greatest folly to reject the symbols themselves. In the doctrines of the Fall of Man, the Incarnation, the Immaculate Conception, the Atonement, the Resurrection and the Trinity we may see mere mythology, mere relics of paganism, of no significance to an age of scientific understanding. But however much we may boast of this understanding, the Catholic Church continues, not only to flourish, but to increase in spite of it. In recent years there has been an important revival in Catholic literature, for the Church has gathered to herself in modern times a group of most able writers—von Hügel, Mercier, Adam, Chesterton, Gilson, Belloc, and Dawson, not to mention that great philosopher of the Eastern Church, Nicholas Berdyacv. There is little doubt that one of the reasons for this revival is that which we have already mentioned—the inevitable revolt of the modern mind against the so-called Age of Reason. But there is another which is perhaps even more important, and this is the tremendous power of the Church's symbols to excite the unconscious depths of the soul. For however much we may imagine ourselves to have cut adrift from them, they return to us under many forms in our dreams and phantasies, when the intellect sleeps and the mind has

## THE FRUIT OF THE TREE

liberty to break from the rational order which it demands. These symbols are far more ancient than the Church; they are found in the mythologies of every culture of antiquity and seem to have been embedded in human thought even in prehistoric times. From time to time fashionable theories arise concerning their origin; it is said that they are "nothing but" phallic, or "nothing but" solar, yet there is always something in these "nothing but" theories which reminds one of the sweeping generalizations of the scientific tyro, of the amateur who desires facts to conform with preconceived theories. Without doubt these archaic symbols are not only phallic and solar but also spiritual, for it appears that all forms of growth and life follow a similar pattern, whether the functions of sex, the stars or the development of divine understanding. To say that a symbol is phallic is not, as some imagine, a way of detracting from its value. On the contrary, if it were unable to be interpreted in a phallic sense it could not be called a universal symbol. For the principles of sex are in no way different from the principles of religion, which is not to say that religion originates in sex, but simply that both are aspects of the same life. If it is going to be argued that all culture is based upon sex, it might equally well be argued that it is based upon breathing or eating, for all three are alike methods of sustaining life and follow the same principles.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Gustav Richard Heyer, *Der Organismus der Seele, eine Einführung in die analytische Seelenheilkunde*, J. F. Lehman-Verlag, Munich, 1932. English translation *The Organism of the Mind*, London, 1933.

## THE SYMBOLS OF CHRISTIANITY

Thus our method will be to work from these symbols, to examine their "orthodox" interpretations, and then to show how much more they can mean in the light of Oriental and modern psychology. And here it must be made clear that we are concerned less with their cosmological, metaphysical and biological meanings than with their application to the human soul. Hence, to begin at the beginning, we are interested rather in the creation and Fall of Adam than in the creation of the universe. Keeping to the ancient order, we shall proceed from Adam to the birth of the Christ, and thence to the Passion and Resurrection, for there is meaning not only in the isolated symbols but also in their whole connection—not only in the Fall and the Incarnation, but in the Fall *followed by* the Incarnation. In the words of St. Paul, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Furthermore, we are not concerned with any historical connection that may or may not exist between the symbols of Christianity and those of Buddhism, Vedanta, Taoism and the Mysteries. It would certainly be convenient if we could be sure that all religions have their root in a central Wisdom Religion imparted to the world from time to time by a secret hierarchy of initiates. This would no doubt solve many of the problems which trouble the religious historian, the scholar who is interested in the spread and evolution of the symbols themselves. But it would be of little concern to those who are simply interested in the meaning of symbols. From the standpoint of meaning it does not matter whether Christianity

## THE FRUIT OF THE TREE

is a development of Paganism, an offshoot of the Wisdom Religion or a purely independent growth. These are historical and not psychological questions.

The doctrine of the Fall and of Original Sin was one of the first Catholic dogmas to be rejected by modern rationalism. For Humanism is distinguished by a certain optimism, a certain faith in the supremacy of human reason, to which the idea of man's essential frailty and sinfulness is wholly repugnant. Since the Great War less and less has been said about the great ideal of Progress so favoured by the scientists and philosophers of an earlier generation, for that war was, among other things, the greatest witness of our age to the truth of Original Sin, to the presence of the unregenerate Adam in the soul of *homo sapiens*. Some may have seen in it the judgement of a wrathful God against a people so confident of their own inherent wisdom as to be able to do without Him ; it would perhaps be more correct to say that the Lord simply left His people to themselves so that, without any interference on His part, their "wisdom" simply proved its own limitations, its incapacity to override that aspect of the soul which corresponds to "nature, red in tooth and claw." For the Church has always taught that man is unable to achieve salvation by his own light. By reason of Adam's disobedience, of his eating of the fruit of the tree of Knowledge, and of his expulsion from Eden, the whole human race has inherited the desire for Sin, for divergence from the will of God. And because "the wages

## NO GOOD WITHOUT EVIL

of sin is death," man has been placed in a condition where there is not only a conflict between good and evil but also between life and death. Thus man is, of his own power, unable to conquer either sin or death ; whatever he may have of goodness and life is tainted by their opposites. In this sense man is predestined to damnation, to eternal banishment from Eden, from the presence of God, to try and work out his own salvation—if he can. But because, in this condition, he is torn mercilessly between good and evil, and because from the frailty of his nature he tends to move towards the latter, life divorced from the presence of God is necessarily a hell. Christian eschatology has made this hell an after-death state, and in the same way has removed the blessedness of Eden to the life beyond the grave. This is perhaps the least profound of all its teachings, for unless it is recognized that heaven and hell are very much in this present world the whole Christian scheme becomes dependent upon metaphysics, and the demise of the body becomes an event of unnecessary significance. The Day of Judgement is thus placed in the future instead of in the past, and though this may be convenient for the purpose of frightening people into good behaviour, it does not encourage any real enlightenment. The Day of Judgement, however, was the day when Adam was banished from Eden, and this involved a judgement not on Adam alone but on his entire progeny. For it signified the removal of man from the Divine Grace, a removal whose necessary and immediate consequence is damnation. But Calvin maintained that there

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was, besides predestination to damnation, predestination to Grace, and that through Adam the human race was not only inevitably sinful, but that "before the foundations of the world were laid" God had foreordained those who were to receive His Grace. This doctrine follows perfectly logically from the conception of an anthropomorphic God who is omnipotent (and thus knows the future). However, it reduces the Christian scheme of the universe to the merely mechanical, to a mere arrangement of wooden chessmen with which God and Satan play on the Eternal Board. Through this doctrine the human being entirely loses significance; all that matters is the struggle of wits between God and Satan, and that is no concern of human beings. For some reason it is considered inevitable that God will win, and the whole procedure is rendered more purposeless than ever. Calvinism may have been a triumph of human logic, but it was an utter defeat of the human soul, and it is to the Catholic Church that we are indebted for preserving that wholly illogical but essentially divine factor called free-will. For this implies that though man has not the power to attain salvation through his own efforts he has freedom to choose between the acceptance and refusal of Grace.

In spite of the revolt of science against the idea of Original Sin, it is science which has in our own time provided the most powerful advocate of that very doctrine. The revelations which this particular scientist presented to a world still deeply imbued with Humanist ideals were received with incredulous horror. But time

and growing knowledge have made us more accustomed to his discovery, and, in spite of some of the unfortunate conclusions he drew from it, it is finding a growing acceptance. When Sigmund Freud declared that beneath our conscious mental processes there are other unconscious and more powerful processes, he was certainly bearing witness to human frailty. And when he showed that some of these processes were peculiarly horrible, he was simply repeating what the Church had always said about man's essential sinfulness. But what made his discoveries especially unpopular was his inconvenient way of discovering the most vile unconscious motives behind the most virtuous conscious deeds. Yet this was only further proof of Christian teaching, in that those who neglect God and attempt to be virtuous of themselves have no real virtue but are simply responding to their evil nature, attempting to deny God by proving that His Grace is not necessary. In this sense the saying holds true that "all good deeds are done for the love of gain." It is possible for cynic and psycho-analyst alike to find, with perfect justice, essentially selfish motives behind apparently unselfish deeds, even though the person in question may be unaware of them.

To obtain a deeper insight into the doctrine of the Fall of Man and Original Sin we must, for the moment, set aside the factor of Divine Grace and consider the life of man as something quite apart from God. In short, we must consider the condition of the soul in its unredeemed and unregenerate state. What is especially

## THE FRUIT OF THE TREE

significant about the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is that it gave man consciousness of good as well as evil. Before the Fall Adam was unaware not only of evil but also of good, and at that point the story leaves us altogether vague as to what manner of life Adam led in the state of blessedness. If we are to consider the myth chronologically, we may perhaps assume that he led a merely amoral existence like the animals, and that the eating of the fruit signified the birth of self-consciousness. Just as the child is apparently without the moral sense of the adolescent and adult, so perhaps Adam led the life of a child concerning which Jesus said, "Except ye be as little children ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." It is here that we receive some enlightenment from the Taoist sages of China, for Taoism also had its state of blessedness and its Fall. Turning to Chuang-Tzu we find the following description of man before the Fall :

Good men were not appreciated ; ability was not conspicuous. Rulers were mere beacons, while the people were free as the wild deer. They were upright without being conscious of duty to their neighbours. They loved one another without being conscious of charity. They were true without being conscious of loyalty. They were honest without being conscious of good faith. They acted freely in all things without recognizing obligations to anyone. Thus their deeds left no trace ; their affairs were not handed down to posterity.

(*Trans. Giles.*)

As to the Fall itself, Lao-Tzu says in the *Tao Tê Ching* :  
"Great Tao lost, and there came duty to man and right

## THE FALL IN TAOISM

conduct." That is to say, as long as one is in perfect accord with the Tao the question of good and evil does not arise; one's actions are spontaneously adapted to social and material conditions. But there comes the Fall, and at once the pairs of opposites are born. Of these Lao-Tzu says (*Tao Tê Ching*, 2):

When all in the world understand beauty to be beautiful, then ugliness exists.

When all understand goodness to be good, then evil exists.

Thus existence suggests non-existence;

Easy gives rise to difficult;

Short is derived from long by comparison;

Low is distinguished from high by position.

(*Trans. Ch'u Ta-Kao.*)

As soon as we are conscious of these opposites it becomes necessary to make laws, to ordain rewards and punishments, to preach good conduct and to study ethics. Thus there arises a violent conflict between good and evil, and because it is impossible for the one to exist in our consciousness without the other, the conflict remains without victory or defeat on either side. But man imagines that by strict obedience to the moral law good can be made to conquer, so much so that much of the ethical teaching of to-day (as of other "rational" ages) is based on the assumption that all that is necessary is a sound law and a powerful will to obedience. People who call themselves Christians so often say that if we only *obeyed* the precepts given in the Sermon on the Mount, that would be sufficient to bring civilization to a state of blessedness. But in the Epistles to the Romans

## THE FRUIT OF THE TREE

and the Galatians St. Paul shows that to rely on law is to enter a spiritual cul-de-sac, to continue in a state of imprisonment between its two sides, good and evil, and to run wildly from one to the other in a vain attempt to find salvation. Thus in the seventh chapter of Romans is the following significant passage :

For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. . . . What shall we say then ? Is the law sin ? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law : *for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.* But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once : but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

St. Paul is not suggesting that the law is in itself an evil, but simply that, as a result of his own fallen state, when the law admonished good this inevitably suggested its opposite, evil.

To some it may not be sufficient to say that we cannot of ourselves overcome evil with good because the two mutually give rise to one another. They will say that this is no more than a logical trick and demand concrete evidence. Let us then imagine for a moment what would happen if everyone suddenly decided to observe the moral law. Apart from the not very serious suggestion that it would cause grave unemployment among policemen, bankers' clerks, ticket-collectors and soldiers, we should find the absence of evil the main cause of its speedy return. For the greater part of virtue, as we

## WITHOUT THE LAW SIN IS DEAD

know it, consists precisely in resisting evil, and goodness derives its health and strength from the exercise of this conflict. Without the stimulus of evil the power of moral resistance would become atrophied, and the moment someone decided that life was growing a little dull and that it might be interesting to have some evil for a change, sin would return with redoubled strength and continue to flourish unopposed until the balance was restored. But as this is somewhat outside the bounds of possibility, let us consider instead the problem of what is known in psychological jargon as "repression." This is generally understood as the conscious or unconscious attempt to resist and banish from the mind an impulse or impression which it either fears or for some other reason considers undesirable. Psychological research reveals that such impulses are in fact not banished but rather aggravated by the resistance offered. In the course of resistance they may be forgotten, because forgetting is in itself an unconscious method of resisting, and, although temporarily unconscious, these impulses cause a state of mental indigestion similar to the results of retaining decayed food in the body. This discovery is often used or condemned as an excuse for all manner of immorality. Yet if the discovery is true, it seems that man has only two alternatives: to contract serious neuroses through repression or to indulge his impulses without restraint. Of course, it is almost impossible to adopt either extreme in its entirety, for man cannot continue on any extreme course for any length of time without meeting

## THE FRUIT OF THE TREE

opposition. Thus in its own terms the problem has no satisfactory solution, for it is concerned only with two opposites—the conscious and the unconscious—and in terms of opposites alone nothing is ever solved.

For the fallen condition of man consists precisely in being bound to this pendulum which swings from one extreme to the other, from good to evil, life to death, pleasure to pain, and love to hate. Indeed, it is upon the fact of opposites that the very existence of the universe depends, for who can conceive light without darkness, fullness without emptiness, expansion without boundary, beginning without ending? Just as man would cease to exist without woman, there could be no life without death. For in eating our food we kill in order that we may live, and from the decaying matter of animals and plants build up the living tissue of our bodies. And from cast-off manure flowers and plants grow again to die in their turn and give nourishment to other forms. Yet it is not usual to consider that there is anything particularly disgusting in this interdependence of life and death, and there is no more reason to find anything repulsive in the existence of an unconscious mind whose contents somewhat resemble manure. When food enters our mouths we like it to look pleasant and taste good, but in the unconscious realms of the stomach and bowels it develops just the opposite qualities. This remains a perfectly natural and happy arrangement until there arises a conflict between the conscious mouth and the unconscious

## THE CONFLICT OF OPPOSITES

stomach. In such conflicts it is usually, in fact always, the unconscious element which asserts itself to most effect. However much we may repress it or try to forget its existence, it suddenly rebels and makes us vomit or else causes all manner of disease. Whereat we are confronted with some highly unpleasant facts about our internal organs. It should not surprise us, therefore, when Freud confronts us with some equally unpleasant facts about the unconscious and internal workings of the mind. For between mental and bodily processes there is an almost exact correspondence, and the maladjustments of modern man may thus in great measure be put down to his disregard of the mental stomach, to his absorption in the purely conscious delights of the feast.

Thus the fallen condition of man does not consist in the fact of there being opposites; it is rather in his incapacity to cope with the conflict between them—a conflict, moreover, which he in his unregenerate state creates. For underlying the conflicts between good and evil, pleasure and pain, life and death, is what might be called the primary conflict between man and the universe, the "I" and the "not-I," the subjective ego and the objective world. Hence we find in the story of the Fall that, before Adam eats of the fruit and so creates the opposition between good and evil, this primary conflict is shown in the temptation to disobey the will of God. For God has created the universe and seen that all in it is good. Everything conforms with His plan, and the world is at one with Him. But be-

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tween Adam and Eve and God there comes the Serpent, and from that moment man is set at variance with God and His universe. He eats of the Tree, and at once God proclaims a state of conflict between Adam and the world.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children. . . . And unto Adam he said . . . Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.

There is a peculiar resemblance between these words and the famous passage on sorrow (*dukkha*) in the first sermon of the Buddha (*Samyutta Nikaya*, v. 421-3). "Birth is sorrow, decay is sorrow, sickness is sorrow, death is sorrow. . . . To be conjoined with things we dislike, to be separated from things which we like—that also is sorrow. Not to get what one wants—that too is sorrow." Sorrow in this sense must be understood not simply as pain as opposed to pleasure. For if we conceive *dukkha* as "discord" or "lack of harmony," we shall see that it refers rather to a state of discord in the relationship between pleasure and pain, implying a conflict between the two opposites. This conflict exists only in the mind of man, for it is he who sets the opposites at war by striving for the perpetuation of one and the abolition of the other. It is precisely this conflict which is at the root of man's misery, of his spiritual dis-ease, for he is seeking something which simply does not exist, which is *maya* in the real sense of that term. For as there is no pleasure without pain, *dukkha* would seem to be the illusion (*maya*) of seeking

## SORROW AND DESIRE

pleasure as a thing-in-itself (*atta*). Therefore the Buddha described all individual things considered in and by themselves as *anatta*, *anicca* and *dukkha*—without soul, impermanent and producing sorrow. Furthermore, man's desire for the thing-in-itself arises from what we have called the primary conflict between himself and the universe, between the part and the whole. For this is the desire (*tanha*) to exist as an isolated being for whom the universe is no more than a personal appendage, imagining that the part has some meaning in and by itself and that the universe can be brought into line with that meaning.

Thus *tanha* can only come into being because man does not understand *anatta*, because he tries to hold himself apart from life as a separate entity. This tremendous attachment to the ego implies that he can only accept those things in life which please it and reject those which give it pain, and in this he is like one who attempts to separate the beautiful parts of the human body from the ugly with the result that he kills both. For *anatta* means that any individual thing taken apart from life has absolutely no meaning, no use, no life, no autonomous soul. For there is no living finger without a hand; a spoke cannot run round without a wheel; a hair cannot grow without a head. For if we consider these two opposites the part and the whole, we see that they can no more exist without each other than pleasure without pain. That they are opposites we know well enough, for each one of us distinguishes sharply between the self and the not-self, subject and object, "I" and the

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universe. But separate self from the universe and it has no existence—it is *anatta*. The converse is also true, and here we have to remember that in original Buddhism there is no reference whatever to the doctrine which some Western interpreters have ascribed to it, namely that the Goal is man's absorption into the universe. For the whole has no existence without its parts. No one ever saw a hammer without handle or head, or a cube without sides, or a tree without leaves, branches, roots or trunk. The Buddha never said that the self does not exist in any sense whatever; indeed, when a certain Vacchagotta pressed him for a definite Yes or No on this point, the only answer he received was a "Noble Silence" (*Samyutta Nikaya*, iv. 400). In the same way he did not say that life is essentially suffering. The point is that without sorrow there is no joy, and joy is not any the less joyful for this reason. On the contrary, if there were no sorrow, joy would not only be tedious but unnoticed. These three misinterpretations have sadly clouded Western understanding of Buddhism, though it should be noted that the West does not bear the sole responsibility. Buddhism has suffered just as much at the hands of certain monk interpreters who have turned it into a philosophy of pure disintegration. They have simply analysed life into its various parts, declared that the whole does not exist because there are only parts, and then proceeded to deny the parts themselves.

A trend of thought similar to the Buddha's may also be found in the *Upanishads*, and here again we have

## MAYA IN THE UPANISHADS

to encounter misinterpretation. For we shall find that what the Buddha described in the three terms of *anatta*, *anicca* and *dukkha* is here contained in the single term *maya*—illusion. In the *Rigveda* the word denotes a cunning device, a magical act or even a trick, but in the *Upanishads* it is given the wider meaning of the trick, the deceit, by which the mind of man produces the illusion of separateness (*sakayaditthi*), the consciousness of objects as realities in themselves. But it is held that the only reality is the Self (*Atman*), and that objects are only real in so far as they are appearances of the Self, which is to say that whereas their distinctive marks are unreal, there is a single Reality from which they are manifested through the ignorance (*avidya*) of our minds. Thus Yajnavalkya says: "When the Self is seen, heard, perceived and known, the whole universe is known," and again, "He who imagines there is plurality goes from death to death." (*Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad*, 4. iv. 19; v. 6). And in the *Chandogya-Upanishad* (7. xxv. 2.) we find: "The Self is above and below, behind and in front. The Self is all the world." In the tropical climate of India this doctrine became what we might call an "excuse for idleness." For it seemed to proclaim the world of form as a dream, a phantasm which the wise would do well to ignore, and in carrying it into practice many a sannyassin became a world-denier, an utterly isolated seeker of enlightenment which, if it satisfied himself, was of little benefit to others. The doctrine of *maya* was thus, on the one hand, the occasion of a *via negativa* which involved the virtual annihilation

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of the world. The seeker lost both himself and the universe in the contemplation of the Infinite—a contemplation which may not appeal to us but requires, we are told, a special sense of appreciation. For the ego is not bored by the Infinite when the ego has ceased to exist. But the difficulty of the Infinite, though some might think it almost blasphemy to say so, is that it is a mere opposite, that it would be altogether inconceivable without the Finite. Someone has even gone so far as to say that "there is nothing infinite apart from finite things" and Chesterton once observed that God is "the synthesis of infinity and boundary." Yet it should be sufficiently obvious that the Infinite means simply that which is not finite and so is only distinguished, only exists, by contrast. This point, however, did not escape the philosophers of Vedanta. For, on the other hand, we find this passage in the *Isha-Upanishad*: "In darkness are they who worship the world alone, but in greater darkness they who worship the Infinite alone. He who accepts both saves himself from death by knowledge of the former and attains immortality by the knowledge of the latter."

But this may seem to be at variance with the true Advaita Vedanta—the doctrine that the world is One, that all forms and qualities are illusion, and that even the illusion is itself an illusion. That is to say, there are not two worlds, the real and the unreal, the Absolute Brahman and the world of forms. For Sankara, the great exponent of Vedanta, says that the latter simply

## THE LIMITATIONS OF INFINITY

does not exist,<sup>1</sup> that there is only the Absolute Infinite Brahman, without form and without attribute, which is described in the *Mandukya-Upanishad* (vii) as

that which is not conscious of the subjective, nor that which is conscious of the objective, nor that which is conscious of both, nor that which is simple consciousness, nor that which is a mass all sentiency, nor that which is all darkness. It is unseen, transcendent, unapprehensible, uninferable, unthinkable, indescribable, the sole essence of the consciousness of self, the negative of all illusion, the ever peaceful, all bliss, the One Unit.

(*Trans. Drivedi.*)

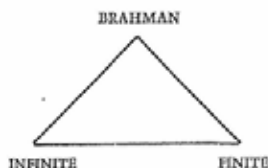
Sankara points out that although the One is described by negatives (*neti, neti*) it is not itself a negative; negatives are only used because "the imagination must have something to stand upon"; in fact, we can only conceive the Infinite as the not finite, as the word itself implies. Yet apparently Sankara would say, not that the Infinite presupposes the finite, but that there is only the Infinite and the finite does not exist. But however satisfactory this may be from the purely metaphysical standpoint, practically it is the absolute denial of the world. If Sankara's philosophy, supposing we have not misunderstood it, is to be made a way of life, it can only lead us to the ultimate futility of pure Infinity, which is to say non-existence, for the Infinite has no existence apart from its opposite, the finite.

But Vedanta can only have meaning and practical application if we understand Sankara in this way:

<sup>1</sup> *Mandukyopaniṣad*, with Sankara's commentary (trans. M. N. Drivedi. Bombay, 1909), pp. 20 et seq.

## THE FRUIT OF THE TREE

that finite and Infinite are not separable, that they are Advaita—not two but One, and that One is Brahman. Thus we have the Trinity :



and these three are One. *Maya* (illusion) is to regard the Infinite as in any way opposed to the finite (or *vice versa*) or to regard Brahman as opposed to finite and Infinite together. Hence, if we say, "There is only the finite," we err ; if we say, "There is only the Infinite," we err. Vedanta denies both, if they are to be sought as things existing apart from each other and without each other ; but it affirms both if they are understood as together being Brahman. Thus it does not deny the world ; it glorifies it by making it one with Brahman. To think that the world is not Brahman is indeed *maya*, but the world ceases to be *maya* when understood as one with Brahman. But that does not mean that the world itself ceases to exist. Hence the saying *Tat tvam asi*—"That (Brahman) art thou !"—and if we understand that, the world is no longer *maya*. In other words, if we apprehend separate forms as one with Brahman, this does not imply that we pass beyond forms into formlessness, into pure Infinity. For Brahman is not formlessness alone, and it must not be thought that the aim

## “TAT TVAM ASI!”

of true Vedanta is absorption into the Infinite, which is tantamount to annihilation. This is expressly stated in one of the most important *Upanishads*, the *Brihadaranyaka*: “In truth there are two forms of Brahman: the formed and the formless, the mortal and the immortal, the solid and the fluid, the definite and the indefinite.” In the same way Deussen writes that “Brahman is *sat* and *asat*, the existing and the non-existing, *satyam* and *asatyam*, reality and unreality.”<sup>1</sup> For here again we have the principle of the Middle Way beyond the opposites. Paradoxically the Goal is both and neither, for it is synthesis, whereby the opposites through themselves surpass themselves, just as man and woman unite, while yet remaining different, and create a child. Taken together, the opposites create and *are* Brahman; taken apart they create *maya*, illusion, which is to say that they cease to exist. We must understand *maya* as the opposites taken apart just because man, when under the veil of *maya*, tries to separate them and to hold to one alone. The error of the opposites is not in *distinguishing* between life and death, but in attempting to isolate them, to hold to the one and reject the other. To the Vedantist and Buddhist alike both are aspects of the same Brahman or Sunyata; thus they deny them as things-in-themselves, not as aspects.

As the philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism was evolved out of Indian thought the idea of the One Reality as something opposed to this unreal world gradually

<sup>1</sup> *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie* (Leipzig, 1894-1908), i. 2, p. 117.

## THE FRUIT OF THE TREE

drifted even farther into the background. Thus Dr. D. T. Suzuki writes :<sup>1</sup>

Sunyata is a concept even prior to the rise of this world of pluralities, underlying it, and at the same time conditioning it so that all individual existences have their being in it. Although we say that Sunyata is "that which underlies" the one and the many, birth and death, you and me, that which is and that which is not, it is not quite right to say "underlies," for it suggests the opposition between that which lies under and that which lies over—which is a new dualism ; and when we go on like this we commit the fault of infinite regression.

Sunyata literally means "Emptiness" or what is sometimes known as "the Void," though according to Dr. Suzuki it should be regarded more as a "third concept" mediating between the opposites and existing in them, so that the whole trinity comprises what the Japanese Mahayanists call *Byodo* in *Shabetsu* and *Shabetsu* in *Byodo*—unity in diversity and diversity in unity. It will be noted that Dr. Suzuki describes Sunyata as that which underlies "the one and the many," for the Mahayana insists that even if one discovers the One Reality behind the manifold appearances the Goal has not yet been achieved. For the Sutras say that we must get rid even of the idea of One-ness, even of Nothingness, until we finally realize the state of "neither existent nor non-existent," "neither nameless nor not nameless" (*hisohihiso-sho*) ; then only have we realized Sunyata. In fact, we may say that Sunyata is neither real nor unreal, positive nor negative, plural nor singular. In other

<sup>1</sup> *Buddhism in the Life and Thought of Japan* (London, 1937), p. 2.

## "THE FULLNESS OF THE VOID"

words, although the Mahayana states it negatively, Sunyata is the synthesis of both. This is perhaps the most fundamental and the least understood principle of Buddhist philosophy, and though we find it stated more explicitly in the Mahayana, it is implied even in the Pali texts of the Hinayana (as in the four *jhanas*). For Buddhism never teaches categorically that the world is unreal ;<sup>1</sup> and when it says that it is neither real nor unreal it is neither avoiding the issue nor making a compromise. Its position is simply that if we conceive a single Reality behind the multitudinous forms of the world, we must not make an opposition between the two. This is in the true Advaita tradition of Indian philosophy ; for Advaita means "not two," and if we begin to think about the real and the unreal, the one and the many, we immediately fall into a dualism. Furthermore, when Buddhism teaches that Sunyata is neither real nor unreal it is not opposing Sunyata to reality and unreality (*sat* and *asat*), for this would be another dualism. It is only another way of saying that Sunyata is both real and unreal. Fundamentally this means that Sunyata is neither of the pairs of opposites but both, that it is neither life nor death alone, neither singular nor plural alone, but that it is the two taken together. Here we return to the original idea that *maya* applies to the opposites considered separately, to reality as existing apart from unreality, to life considered as something which can be had without death. But it does not apply to the opposites when seen as mutually dependent.

<sup>1</sup> . *Samyutta Nikaya*, iv. 400.

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Thus if we try to grasp pleasure and reject pain, we seek a *maya* ; if we accept both we find Brahman.

This is even more clearly stated in Taoism, for the Chinese preferred to use the language of everyday life rather than the jargon of philosophy. Indeed, so clearly did Taoism grasp the idea of the opposites as mutually dependent that it is almost unique among religions in possessing no moral code. Both Buddhism and Vedanta speak of the Goal as beyond Good and Evil, yet at the same time they provide a morality for the discipline of those who have not reached the spiritual insight of the sage. Thus both Buddhism and Vedanta were able to retain a certain dignity when they became popular creeds, whereas Taoism very rapidly degenerated into a mixture of laziness and superstition. This, however, is no reflection on the truth of Taoism, for often enough in the greatest truth is the greatest danger. Essentially Taoism was a religion for the few, for it recognized fully the interdependence of good and evil, and preached what might be called a Greater Good beyond the pairs of opposites. But for those whose understanding is not sufficiently developed, the doctrine of the relativity of good and evil is simply an excuse for libertinism. Thus Chuang Tzu says :

Those who would have right without its correlative, wrong ; or good government without its correlative, misrule,—they do not apprehend the great principles of the universe nor the conditions to which all creation is subject. One might as well talk of the existence of heaven without that of earth, or of the negative principle without the positive, which is clearly absurd.

(*Trans. Giles.*)

## AVOIDING EXTREMES

The obvious conclusion would be that if it is impossible to have good government without misrule, no harm can be done by indulging in misrule to our heart's content, and no good by rebelling against tyranny. And once again we see that the problem has no solution in its own terms. However much Chuang Tzu's dry statement may conflict with our ideals, we have to admit that in those words he has summed up the whole history of human politics to the present day. For the Taoist views morality neither as something with which the world can dispense, nor as a sign of spiritual progress. He does not strive to cultivate it in others or in himself any more than he strives to cultivate immorality. He simply observes that the two must necessarily follow one another or exist together, because they are back and front of the same coin. He has no moral law to preach, for he knows that if there is evil, a moral law will arise of itself and vice versa. For this reason the advice which the Taoist sages gave to the rulers of states may seem the purest cynicism. "The energies of the Emperor should be directed to keeping the minds of the people unpreoccupied and their bellies well filled." For the uncomfortable fact is that unless people can of themselves find the Tao, the ruler must just do his best to keep a balance between extremes.

Not exalting the worthy keeps the people from emulation. Not valuing rare things keeps them from theft. Not showing what is desirable keeps their hearts from confusion.

(*"Tao Tz Ching,"* III. *Trans. Ch'u Ta-Kao.*)

In fact the object of Taoist politics seems to be

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to avoid extremes of evil by avoiding extremes of good.

Do away with learning, and grief will not be known.

Do away with sageness and eject wisdom, and the people will be more benefited a hundred times. . . .

Do away with artifice and eject gains, and there will be no robbers and thieves.

(*Ibid.*, XIX.)

This, however, is rather different from the advice given to the ruler for directing his own life—advice which, as we shall see, concerns the same Middle Way that we find in Buddhism and Vedanta. And here again let it be said that the Middle Way is not just an avoidance of extremes like Taoist politics. This is but a shadow of the Middle Way, and there is much to be said for the wisdom of Buddhism and Vedanta in incorporating a moral law as well as a mystical philosophy. For even if morality is, by itself, utterly unable to remove evil from the world, it does at least give that mental concentration which is necessary for the Middle Way apart from any question of good and evil whatsoever. For where there is morality there is struggle, certainly indecisive struggle, but nevertheless life and movement. It may be moving round in circles, but it saves the soul from petrefaction. It has been said that where there are great saints there are great sinners; thus there is perhaps more virtue in the great sinner than in the man who is a moral nonentity, who is no better than a lump of wood or a piece of stone. A criminal may be going in the wrong direction, but he is at least *going*. Hence

## THE MORAL PENDULUM

the words of the Bible, "because thou art neither hot nor cold I will spew thee out of my mouth," and hence also Christ's preference of publicans and sinners to the pharisees who prided themselves on the somewhat useless attainment of *not* being very evil. Herein is the stupidity of the merely negative precept so often mistaken for an effective moral code, for it does not follow that because a person is not evil he is therefore necessarily good. He is just neither good nor evil, which is not the same thing as being beyond good and evil. In one sense it is the difference between stopping the swing of a pendulum altogether and, alternatively, going to the point on which it hangs. That point represents the Middle Way, for though the opposites depend on it they do not affect it.

Nevertheless, it remains true that, apart from that point on which the pendulum hangs, we have to choose between an alternation of good and evil or mere lifeless mediocrity. For unless we consider that *tertium quid* which relates the opposites to one another and at the same time surpasses them, we are hopelessly bound by the curse of Adam, involved in a mechanical, deterministic and barren condition from whose logic there is no release. This is yet another example of the insufficiency of reason alone to cope with the deepest problems of life; at its best it will try to subject all things to the moral order, neglecting the irrational and unconscious forces of disorder which have an equal claim to recognition; at its worst it will perceive the inevitability of this moral alternation and preserve an attitude of "fatalistic

## THE FRUIT OF THE TREE

realism." Christianity has a profound understanding of this problem, for in recognizing man's inability to solve it of his own will and reason, it finds this *tertium quid* in the Grace of God which brings Christ to birth in the human soul. It does not reserve the gift of Grace for the morally perfected; Grace is offered through Christ freely to all. This is clearly implied in the parable of the Wedding Feast, but our nature is such that we "all with one accord begin to make excuse." Hence all the riff-raff "both bad and good" from the highways and hedges are invited in our place. The same teaching is found even more expressly in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. For morality is no passport to religion; on the contrary, there can be no real morality without religion, for try as one may, one cannot be wholly and consistently moral until some form of religious experience has entirely changed one's desires. Unless man *desires* the highest good he only deceives himself if he tries to obtain it against his inmost wishes, and, in Christian terminology, it is only the Grace of God which can create that desire. In other words, while desire is simply concerned with the conflict between the opposites man is perpetually confused. But if he desires the Christ, the Brahman, the Tao, the Sunyata, he will attain salvation whatever his moral status. For this new and irrational element will break up the logic of the opposites, giving man dominion over them instead of being no more than the ball which is tossed between.

## MORALITY IS NOT RELIGION

Unfortunately, however, it is not clear how far this is realized by the leaders of modern Christianity. So far as its evangelical work in the West is concerned it appears that especially among certain Protestant sects religious questions are given second place to moral questions. So much is said about the evils of war, of unemployment, of the alleged immorality in matters of sex, that there has long been the most absurd confusion between morality and religion. Presumably the Churches wish modern man to become more religious, but to effect this they must offer Christ and not the Sermon on the Mount or any other system of ethics. A man is not religious because he abstains from theft drink, adultery, gambling, fighting and telling lies; indeed, he may be anything but religious, and if anyone imagines that the West is to be recalled to Christianity by an appeal to morality he is surely trying to "make the tail wag the dog." But there are additional difficulties. Christianity seems to be deficient in religious technique. That is to say, it is too much inclined to offer supposed historical facts as a means of salvation. For there is a perfectly legitimate type of mind which cannot find any enthusiasm for someone, however great, who lived and died two thousand years ago and now exists in some indefinite and disembodied state. It does not understand how the death of that person can have any connection with the soul's redemption. After all, thousands of others were crucified as well, many of them just as undeservedly. In short, it cannot conceive that any series of historical events can have

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any important relationship with the inner life of someone living in a different time and a different place. Certainly one may read the Gospels and try to follow the example of Christ, but this is no more than imitation. In a sense the story is as vivid to-day as ever, but the Church is not sufficiently clear when it offers Christ as to what it offers other than an admittedly remarkable story. Moreover, a whole number of important matters such as the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection are removed to the realms of history and eschatology, whereas what so many of us want to know in this time is how Christ is to be born in us, to make the sacrifice in us and to rise again in us. In fact, if the Church would place the emphasis on the Christ story as an inner experience for each man instead of on a primarily historical basis, it would be found of infinitely greater value. The difficulty is that not only the historical emphasis but also the accepted technique of prayer is for some people simply a means of putting Christ at a distance. For some, prayer is a perfectly suitable way of approach, but it must be understood that for various types of mind various forms of mysticism are required, and of these prayer is only one. Moreover, it creates the dualism of the one who prays and the one who is prayed to, and it is necessary to come closer than that, even to a union between Christ and the soul. In the words of St. Paul: "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*" (Galatians ii. 20). It is as if the centre of consciousness were shifted from the ego to the Christ,

## THE MEDIATOR

and this should be distinguished from a union with God, for Christ is the *mediator* between God and man and so represents that third principle which reconciles the part with the whole, man with the universe. Thus Christ is both Son of God and Son of Man, the Holy Child that is born from the two. Once again, if we would understand more of this Divine Incarnation, if we would find the technique which Christianity lacks in its present form, we must turn to Asia for further knowledge of the Middle Way.

### III. THE SON OF GOD AND MAN

THERE is a saying that the child is father to the man, and this is true not only in the sense that the child grows into manhood and that in his infancy he plants the seeds that bear fruit in maturity. For the child is father to the man in the deeper sense that without him the division of our kind into man and woman would have no meaning. If the male is of no account without the female, still less are both male and female of any account without the child, who is in this sense both their cause, their *raison d'être*, and the product of the relationship between them. So also a symphony is born of the male sound and the female silence, being a rhythm of notes sounded and silenced. By itself, sound is nothing, for it is unknown without silence, and in the same way silence by itself is unknown. Moreover, there is nothing in mere silence and mere sound unless the two are united by a meaning, which is the symphony. This Meaning, therefore, which unites, brings forth and is brought forth by the opposites is what is called in St. John's Gospel the Word (*Logos*), and in the Eastern religions the Dharma and the Tao. Therefore St. John writes :

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. . . . He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, but his own received him not. But as many as received

## THE WORD MADE FLESH

him, *to them gave he power to become the sons of God.* . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

If these words are considered apart from the historical context with which they are usually associated, we may begin to understand something of this symbol of the Incarnate Word, the Christ, and of the tremendous number of its implications. Indeed, it would be no new thing in Christian history if the historical context were given a second place, for St. Paul himself appears to be far more interested in Christ as a spiritual experience than as the person who worked and taught in Judaea a little before his own time. For St. Paul hardly ever quotes the parables and precepts recorded in the Gospels, and it seems almost as if Jesus of Nazareth was wholly unknown to him, but for his use of the name Jesus and for his references to the Passion and Resurrection. These latter, however, were no new ideas in the Near East ; the cross was no new symbol and the death and resurrection of the God were certainly as old as the myth of Osiris. This is not to cast any doubt on the Gospel story ; it is only to show that if indeed there was a Jesus of Nazareth who was born of a virgin and lived as the Gospels record and was what the Gospels claimed, then He was the living symbol of what must happen in every man who follows the life of the spirit.

Throughout St. Paul's Epistles there are constant references to the birth of Christ in man which would seem to bear out the words of St. John, " But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," or as St. Paul says even more explicitly,

## THE SON OF GOD AND MAN

he who receives comes "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." It follows, therefore, that Christ is not just some separate Deity to whom we should offer prayers for Grace and forgiveness, but something which we must ourselves *become*, or rather, something which, in union with life, we must produce just as man and woman produce the child.

The original conflict which resulted in the Fall of Adam was this opposition between man and the universe, and Christ as the redeemer of the Fall must signify the restoration of harmony between these two. In this connection Christ represents the Meaning of the two opposites, man and the universe, the part and the whole. It is said that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, but the relationship between parts and whole is best understood if we remember that there are two wholes: one which is just the sum of the parts, which is the universe, and one which is greater, the Christ. That is to say, there is nothing in the parts taken separately and nothing in the parts taken together to form a whole unless there is a relationship, a meaning, between each and all which makes up the meaning of the whole organism. If a whole is just to be described as the sum of its parts, then we may say that playing a violin is a mere matter of scraping cats' entrails with horsehair. But the whole which is greater than the sum of its parts is the meaning, the music, the *raison d'être* of that interaction of cats' entrails and horsehair which is called playing a violin. And just as both bow and strings

## THE BIRTH OF MEANING

move in rhythm with the meaning which is music, so man and the universe can move in rhythm with that meaning which is the Tao. Thus Chuang Tzu says :

If metal and stone were without Tao, they would not be capable of emitting sound. And just as they possess the property of sound, but will not emit sound unless struck, so surely is the same principle applicable to all creation.

(*Trans. Giles.*)

Therefore, from man's point of view, if the Christ or the Tao is to be realized, there must first be a union between himself and the universe to give that realization birth. This, however, must not be understood as the absorption of the soul into a pantheistically conceived God. If a book is to be read with meaning it is of no use either just to look at it and think one's own thoughts or to allow oneself to be completely absorbed and carried away. There must be a union between one's own thoughts and the thoughts expressed in the book, and then only will there be a meaning in both reading and writing it. Similarly no one has ever seen an egg composed of a cock and hen rolled into one and put inside a shell, or even a clock in which all the parts are so perfectly in union with the whole that they cease to be distinguishable.

But if man is to resolve this primary conflict between himself and the universe, he must first come to a full understanding of the pairs of opposites. In psychological terms this is called "acceptance of life," and this means acceptance in all its aspects, just as the plant welcomes light and air with the flower, and slime and

## THE SON OF GOD AND MAN

dirt with the roots. In other words, we deceive ourselves if we imagine that the purity of the flower or all those aspects of life which are noble and beautiful have no positive relationship with the slime. At the same time, there is no need to seek out the slime with the flower and the sun with the roots, because the ugliness of the slime does not in any way detract from the beauty of the flower. Thus it cannot be argued that the psychological doctrine of the Unconscious reduces human nature to nothing but filth, even though some psychologists seem a little anxious to prove that it does. The point is that there is both beauty and filth, and neither is any more essential than the other. Hence Heyer says in his *Organism of the Mind* :

One who has risen out of the "lees" but remains thankful to his maternal menstrium and is in no wise revolted by the knowledge that his roots strike deep into it, is a human being who has undergone a natural and healthy development out of the earthly sphere. Defective and inadequate, on the other hand, has been the development of him who is ashamed of his roots—precisely because he has never achieved the requisite freedom from them. (p. 165.)

In Taoism this acceptance of life is known as *wu-wei* (lit. "non-assertion"), or giving up the attempt to make the universe subservient to the self. In the words of Chuang Tzu :

For the perfect man employs his mind as a mirror. It grasps nothing ; it refuses nothing. It receives, but does not keep. And thus he can triumph over matter without injury to himself.

(*Trans. Giles.*)

It is interesting to compare this with a letter written to

## THE FLOWER HAS ROOTS IN MUD

Jung by one of his patients and quoted by him in his commentary to *The Secret of the Golden Flower* :

Out of evil, much good has come to me. By keeping quiet, repressing nothing, remaining attentive, and hand in hand with that, by accepting reality—taking things as they are, and not as I wanted them to be—by doing all this, rare knowledge has come to me. . . . I always thought that, when we accept things, they overpower us in one way or another. Now this is not true at all, and it is only by accepting them that one can define an attitude toward them. So now I intend playing the game of life, being receptive to whatever comes to me, good and bad . . . also my own nature with its positive and negative sides. (p. 126.)

Before the Christ can be born there must be acceptance both of the external world and of the unconscious depths of one's own soul. Certainly the ego will resort to a thousand cunning devices to avoid this acceptance, not the least of which is to pretend that as the opposites are *maya* they can just be ignored. Thus the fallacy of Christian Science and so much of that so-called optimistic philosophy of New Thought is that it simply avoids death, evil and pain by treating them as illusions. But the paradox is that evil can only be overcome by the fullest acceptance, and hence the precept of Jesus, "Resist not evil." As this precept is often made the excuse for absolute pacifism, it is relevant here to remark that in the same way war is not overcome by avoiding it but only by accepting it as an integral part of our nature. For the pacifist is inclined to ignore wholly his own unconscious desires for war, though for this he compensates by the highly aggressive way in which he advocates his peaceful views.

## THE SON OF GOD AND MAN

The refusal to accept, which is the primary conflict between God and Adam, is in a sense the refusal to allow the universe to live, for it involves resistance to the two factors which are essential to life, namely, the opposites and change. For if we are to allow the universe to give us life, we must also allow it to give us death. This is not only a matter of welcoming death merely because it makes life possible ; it is also welcoming death as an essential part of life—not so much of life as we understand it, opposed to death, but rather of that Greater Life which is made up of living and dying just as a symphony is made up of the sounding and silencing of notes. Because there is no change without death, and no life without change, he who would not change, who would not die, is already dead. For he denies life by desiring the eternity of its forms, of himself and of the things and people he loves and values. But such love is not love of the living person ; it is just love of the pleasing effect which that person has on oneself at a certain time ; it does not welcome his right to change and die which is the absolute condition of his being alive in any sense at all, which is indeed just the thing that *makes* him live. For life is more than its forms, and if this were not so the work of life would come to an end in each created thing. If the flower did not die, the seeds would not ripen and be scattered ; if man were immortal he would need no children to preserve his kind. He would be finished, complete, an unmoving perfection of as little interest or value as if he were frozen into stone. If forms were

## WE LIVE BECAUSE WE DIE

immortal, life would die, for life is precisely an everlasting re-creation out of death. Like Chuang Tzu's perfect man it goes forward for ever receiving and not keeping, being received and not being kept, and in this is its freedom and its undying wonder. Thus to the Taoist sages perfection never meant conclusion.

Therefore it is the experience of everyone that the moment we try to make our happiness secure it vanishes, and that the more we try to hold on to youth and beauty, the more we feel them slipping away. For in denying the approach of age we deny our very existence, for existence is not a matter of remaining fixed but of moving on. The denial of life is like trying to grasp water in one's hands, for the harder one grips, the faster it slips through one's fingers. Or again, if one tries to shut the wind in a box, at once it ceases to be wind and in time becomes foul and stagnant air. In the same way a beam of sunlight can never be caught in a room by pulling down the blind, for whatever is cut off from the living whole vanishes away. It is just this cutting off which stands in the way of reconciliation between man and the universe, for it will be remembered that in the myth our fallen state originally began by cutting off a fruit from the Tree. For cutting off, dissection, is done to corpses, and not to living bodies if they are to remain alive. In this, therefore, is the whole fallacy of materialism which claims to prove that there is no Divinity in the universe and no soul in man by mere analysis, by taking them to pieces and failing to discover any parts which answer to the names

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"God" and "soul." It is like taking a watch to pieces to tell the time or expecting a post-mortem to reveal the secrets of a woman's beauty.

Nowhere is this attitude of *wu-wei* more clearly reflected than in the paintings of those Chinese and Japanese artists whose work was influenced by Taoism and Zen Buddhism. It is often said that they painted the soul of the object rather than the object itself, and this is true so long as the word "soul" does not call to our minds any impression of a formless and airy being with no particular characteristics. By soul in this connection we must understand meaning or Tao, although this is something which can never be fully expressed in any shapes or words. Therefore the painter indicates rather than explains, suggests rather than describes, for his object is not to convey to others a complete representation which finishes with the painting and leaves the beholder nothing to do but admire. Rather he wishes to start a movement which is to be continued in the beholder's mind; he desires a co-operation between himself and those who look at his work, and therefore he leaves empty spaces, unfinished forms and hints of colour. He gives enough to excite and too little to satisfy, and thus he extracts a positive response of the imagination from others which, together with his own suggestion, creates the full meaning or, in other words, bears a child. Hence the masterpieces of Chinese painting are never ends in themselves; they are never what we should call perfect or faithful representations, for the artist has no desire to fix any living subject in

## THE TAO IN CHINESE ART

a dead and rigid form of paint. It is, as it were, that he does not want to capture a bird on his silk, but to make it fly off it. In this connection there is a story concerning the Japanese painter Kanaoka. Some farmers living near him found that on several occasions their crops had been roughly trampled down during the night. When someone entered the local temple early one morning, he was surprised to find the painting of a horse which Kanaoka had put there covered with sweat and clouded with steam. The artist was immediately summoned, and, having drawn in a post and a rope tethering the horse to it, the farmers were given no further trouble.

But the influence of Taoism and Zen is exhibited to a greater degree in a form of painting with which the West is somewhat unfamiliar. This is regarded by Far Eastern connoisseurs as the very highest branch of art next to calligraphy, from which it is derived, and most of the examples of this kind of work are now in private collections in Japan.<sup>1</sup> In Japan it is known as Sumiye, which is to say painting in black ink on a plain white surface, usually a thin, brittle paper or sometimes silk. The interesting feature of both media

<sup>1</sup> Only some six or seven examples were shown at the International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London in 1935-6. A fine series of reproductions, however, may be found in Ernst Grosse's *Die Ostasiatische Tuschemalerei*, Bruno Cassirer Verlag, Berlin, 1923. Grosse has prefaced them with a full account of the connections of this branch of painting with Taoism and Zen. Further examples may be found in Dr. D. T. Suzuki's *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, Vols. II and III, London and Kyoto, 1933 and 1934.

## THE SON OF GOD AND MAN

is that the lines must be drawn swiftly and without hesitation or the ink will blot, and further that it is impossible to erase any error. Thus the artist had to commit his inspiration to paper in the few moments while it was still alive, for there could be no question of making a rough sketch and then slowly filling in the details after the manner of Western painters. In Sumiye the act of painting of a bird in flight is as living as the bird itself. For the bird does not stay poised in the air to adjust the curve of its wing ; it cannot go back in time to correct the movement of its flight ; and, unless it is stuffed and put in a glass case, it is here one moment and gone the next so that there is no time to study and analyse it. Hence in a similar momentary flash the artist commits it to paper as irrevocably as its own coming and going. If he stops to think, an ugly blot appears and the inspiration has gone. For he must go forward with his work as unhesitatingly as life itself is moving. To change the metaphor, he must sing in time with the music ; to stop to consider a note, to hold it for longer than its time, to sing a phrase over and over again until it is correct, this is to lose touch, to wander off into a world which the music of life has left behind. Thus the result of his work is a painting which lives in the truest sense of the word ; there is no hint of the glass case such as one may find in Thorburn and other European bird painters. Similarly, when his subject is a spray of flowers, a branch of bamboo or a twisted pine, there is nothing of the monumental fixity of so many European flower-pieces, symmetrically

## IN TIME WITH CHANGE

arranged in their vases. Each leaf of the bamboo is drawn with one rapid sweep of the brush, and as it sways in the wind this technique gives it a vitality which no *adagio* painting can attain. Yet it is not simply a matter of speed ; in fact, speed is the result rather than the cause, for the artist brings himself into such direct contact, such perfect harmony, with his subject that he moves as it moves and creates his picture as Nature expresses herself in the flying bird.

This, therefore, is something of what is meant by a union of man with the universe. It is chiefly a matter of keeping one's mind in the same rhythm, as with music, of accepting each change as it comes without wanting to go back, without wishing to hold and keep anything that may come. It is just this holding which destroys the union, for it is the conflict of the ego with the world, the desire to dissect the living body, to explain away the music as a series of pleasant and unpleasant noises. Thus Chuang Tzu says again : " The Master (Lao Tzu) came because it was his time to be born ; he went, because it was his time to die. For those who accept the phenomenon of birth and death in this sense, lamentation and sorrow have no place."

But so far we have considered this attitude mainly in relation to the external world, from what Jung might call the " extraverted " point of view. It applies equally to that internal world which we apprehend as something other than the conscious ego, to the Unconscious—the internal reflection of the external universe. For just as man is inseparably bound up with the universe

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from without, just as he derives life from earth, rain, air, sun, father and mother, so he is bound up to the universe from within. For here, according to Jung, is a vast concourse of mental tendencies inherited from our ancestors, linking us up with the race, with animals, and, perhaps it will in time be shown, with plants and rocks. Our minds contain all the characteristics of life, and we bring to consciousness just as much as we desire. Yet here again there is conflict between the ego and the universe, and, as in its outer aspect, the conflict has two general forms. On the one hand, the ego may so isolate itself from the world as to ignore its existence except as a convenient or inconvenient personal appendage; on the other, it may be so overwhelmed by the pressure of circumstances that self-confidence and self-respect are destroyed. In each case it is necessary to achieve a point of balance, a poise, between the two. Thus we find some who so far ignore the Unconscious as to deny its existence, who trust overmuch in their own reason; others are so overcome by its impulses and phantasies that they find dreams more real than concrete facts.

In this realm it is perhaps more helpful to turn to India than to China, for to some extent we may say that the technique of Yoga is introverted and the technique of Taoism extraverted. While the Chinese looks at Nature and the ordinary affairs of life, the Indian looks into his own mind, and in this we may find reason for the general superiority of the Chinese in art and craftsmanship, and of the Indian in philosophy and psychology.

## TAOISM AND YOGA

Yet so far as psychology is concerned, the difference is of quantity rather than quality. Indian psychology is more elaborate, more technical, whereas the Chinese is subtle without being complex. It is profound knowledge contrasted with a simplicity which is as obvious as one's own nose and yet unnoticed just because it is so close. Thus, generally speaking, the Chinese are subtle because they see what others miss by looking too far afield; but the Indians go farther afield than anyone else and, as it were, come back to the Chinese by going round the world.

However, seeing that generalizations are notoriously unsafe, it may be better to replace the terms "Indian" and "Chinese" by "Yoga" and "Taoism," for unquestionably Yoga, as a technique of meditation, comprises the most elaborate science of the "inner life" known to Asia, even to the world. Yet there is Karma Yoga, the Yoga of action, and Taoist Yoga, the Taoism of meditation, for extraverts and introverts can never correspond exactly with the divisions between peoples. Each philosophy is sufficiently catholic to adapt itself where necessary to different types of mind. It is almost certain, however, that Taoist Yoga was derived in great measure from India, and it is here that we must look for the greater wealth of information.

At the present time there is a large amount of literature on Yoga in European languages, a large proportion of which, if not erroneous, is distinctly dangerous. For apart from any psychological harm that may be done by wrong use of this science, serious physiological

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damage may result from certain exercises in breathing and posture which require the personal guidance of an expert teacher. Many self-styled "teachers" are to be found in Europe and America who advertise their "knowledge" and propose to sell it for money. But of this one may be sure: that no genuine teacher (*guru*) will either advertise himself or accept payment, nor will he attempt to impose on another any system, practice or belief which he has no particular desire to know. Moreover, he will never describe Yoga as a means of obtaining wealth and power, nor encourage the development of psychic faculties as ends in themselves. Unfortunately in certain "theosophical" and "occult" circles there is an absurd love of "*guru* hunting," of trying to find a Master who, for the mere asking, will impart divine understanding to merely curious, self-seeking or deluded enquirers. There is, however, the pertinent Eastern saying, "When the pupil is ready, the teacher will appear." Thus it is no one's concern to seek, desire or trouble himself about a teacher in this particular sense. In this present stage of our evolution so few are even ready for a teacher that the question should never enter our thoughts; our task is simply to go on with our work as we find it, seeking what knowledge we require from sources which bear directly on that work. That is to say, it is not our concern to explore high states of consciousness and psychic conditions until we have mastered those lower strata of the mind which will provide us with more than enough work for many years to come. We

## FROM IDENTITY TO UNITY

cannot pass on to ecstatic contemplations, to "cosmic consciousness," or any other form of what is known in Yoga as *samadhi*, until we have come to terms with those very "earthy" impulses, fears and "complexes" which lurk unknown in the depths of the mind. This applies especially to modern man of the West with his intellectual, humanist traditions, and it is precisely his particular problem which we have set out to consider. Certainly there are those among us who are different, who are nearer to the "primitive" and for whom this question does not yet exist. But in modern civilization, those who form the intelligentsia, who interest themselves in religion, philosophy and psychology, are for the most part unfamiliar with and often obstinately blind to their unconscious depths. The primitive, on the other hand, is so close to those depths that he is almost identified with them, that there exists between him and the Unconscious what Levy-Brühl has termed the *participation mystique*, the union with Nature which modern man sometimes mistakes for a higher state of life than his own. But it is not a true union, and perhaps in this connection it would be better to use the term "identification," because there can be no productive union until there has first been differentiation. The state of the primitive is, as it were, the *primaeval* Chaos which existed before heaven and earth were divided. There came the estrangement of earth from heaven through Adam, but in Christ they are again brought together. In the same way, modern man is estranged from Nature. One might almost say

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that the primitive *is* Nature, but both in mind and external circumstances modern man lives in an artificial, intellectual and mechanical world. This is a necessary stage in his development, for it must precede a union which is not a return to the primitive condition, not an identification, but a co-operation in which unity and difference are equally balanced. This is organism as distinct from both undifferentiated fluidity and conflicting division.

Thus it is not a question of "returning to Nature" or leading "the simple life." None of the gains of civilization need be cast aside in favour of a return to the earth or to the animal freedom of the Unconscious ; no complete reversal of civilized manners, customs and traditions is involved, no abolition of machinery, no lowering of culture to primitive levels. For what is necessary is a *relating* of civilization to Nature, not the substitution of Nature for civilization. But it is important to distinguish here between the *participation mystique* of the primitive and the psychology of Chinese and Indian mysticism. For in the golden ages of Chinese and Indian thought their culture was something far removed from savagery. The necessary element of artificiality, of differentiation from Nature, was provided for the Chinese in the *Four Books* of Confucius and for the Indians in Manu, and these in no way corresponded to the elaborate system of taboos which compose the greater part of primitive social order. For the taboo springs from an unreasoning fear, whereas the laws of Manu and the *Four Books* are founded on

## TO UNITE ONE MUST FIRST DIVIDE

reason and a high sense of moral and aesthetic values. Hence the Dharma and the Tao were evolved by people as civilized in their own way as ourselves, and they represent not the return to Nature but the union of Art and Nature, understanding "Art" in its widest sense.

But before modern man can attain the greatest heights of Chinese and Indian mysticism, he must first become conscious of Nature in and around him, though not identified with it. For this, not only modern psychology, but also Christianity itself, have in some measure prepared the way in revealing the Unconscious and the reality of Original Sin. There can be no union until one is first fully aware of the opposite factor with which union is to be made, and because the East had already achieved that awareness, its philosophy is concerned mainly with the act of union. In Yoga, however, there are described a number of methods by which the irrational forces of the mind may be brought to light, in order, it is said, to show the disciple just how great are the powers with which he must come to terms. Thus Patanjali opens the second book of his *Yoga Sutra* by saying, "The preliminary exercises for those who wish to practise Yoga include discipline or *relaxation of tension*." Each aphorism in this *sutra* is, as it were, a summary of a whole body of teaching, and the whole work is one of the most remarkable examples of saying much with the minimum of words. It may seem peculiar to us to speak of discipline as "*relaxation of tension*," but in Yoga relaxation is the essential pre-

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liminary to all exercise and many methods are taught for achieving it in both body and mind.

Relaxation implies the loosening of all artificial strain, and so involves a weakening of those intellectual forces which strive to hold the Unconscious in check. Therefore it is not surprising that nearly all authorities on Yoga refer to the innumerable desires, fears and impressions which rush to consciousness as soon as the disciple begins to meditate. This is recognized as a perfectly natural stage, so much so that one of the exercises prescribed is just to let the mind think what it likes, and to observe and note the undreamed-of things which rise to its surface. Thus Vivekananda writes in his *Raja Yoga* : <sup>1</sup>

The first lesson is to sit for some time and let the mind run on. The mind is bubbling up all the time. It is like the monkey jumping about. Let the monkey jump as much as he can ; you simply wait and watch. Knowledge is power says the proverb, and that is true. Until you know what the mind is doing you cannot control it. Give it the full length of the reins ; many most hideous thoughts may come into it ; you will be astonished that it was possible for you to think such thoughts. But you will find that each day the mind's vagaries are becoming less and less violent, that each day it is becoming calmer.

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<sup>1</sup> This passage is taken from p. 67 of the 1901 edition. It has since been reprinted by an Indian publisher. The book consists of lectures originally given in Chicago, and though the bulk of the information is sound, various practices relating to the control of the breath are described which would be extremely dangerous for most Westerners. Later in his life Vivekananda regretted that he had ever published these.

## LETTING GO

It is important to note here the differentiation between the thoughts and the "Seer" who observes them. The mind is allowed to run wild, but at the same time an objective attitude is maintained towards it so that the Unconscious is realized once again, but without the *participation mystique*. Similar methods are used to-day in psychotherapy. Sometimes the patient is made to lie relaxed and to say whatever comes into his mind, and if the experiment is successful, he finds that his resistance to unconscious impressions is dwindling and that he reveals facts of great importance to his treatment, facts which no amount of deliberate and reasoned thinking would have produced. Somewhat the same method is found in Jung's technique of "active imagination," in which the patient relaxes and simply lets himself create a phantasy, a day-dream, which he afterwards describes to the doctor. Or again, the method of "unconscious drawing" may be used, in which the patient paints or draws these impressions as they come freely to consciousness. Thereafter he studies them objectively, so avoiding the *participation mystique* and preparing for the act of union which will bring conscious and unconscious into a balanced and creative relationship. For the same reason every school of modern psychotherapy gives careful attention to dreams, for in sleep the same relaxation of artificial restraint is achieved. But there is this difference: that in the dream the unconscious processes take possession of the conscious and there exists a *participation mystique* similar to the waking state of the primitive. Thus it is significant

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that the primitive finds it hard to distinguish between dreams and reality.

It is therefore interesting to compare the passage quoted above from Vivekananda with the following from Jung (*Secret of the Golden Flower*, pp. 90-91) :

The key is this : we must be able to let things happen in the psyche. . . . Consciousness is forever interfering, helping, correcting and negating, and never leaving the simple growth of the psychic processes in peace. . . . It consists solely in watching objectively the development of any fragment of fantasy. . . . These exercises must be continued until the cramp in the conscious is released, or, in other words, until one can let things happen ; which was the immediate goal of the exercise. In this way, a new attitude is created, an attitude which accepts the irrational and the unbelievable, simply because it is what is happening. This attitude would be poison for a person who has already been overwhelmed by things that just happen, but it is of the highest value for one who, with an exclusively conscious critique, chooses from the things that happen only those appropriate to his consciousness.

Jung is especially wise in pointing out the danger of this technique for those who are overwhelmed by psychic "happenings," but this condition is generally found in modern civilization among those neurotic cases where there is a regression to the primitive state. Among the majority of thinking people, however, this technique is necessary before the main work of Yoga can be started. And this is precisely the task of achieving between the conscious and the unconscious, as between the ego and the external world, that new centre of being which we have called the Christ or the Tao, known in Yoga as the Purusha. This is clearly set forward

## THE EGO AND THE SELF

in the second book of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* (II. 21, 22, 23, 48) :

Nature (the world of opposites) has no ulterior purpose of her own. The only reason for her existence is the perception of her by the Purusha.

Yet there is objective reality in the universe, for it is the common source of all experience, and does not cease to exist because one soul ceases to be bound by it.

The self-identification of the Purusha with phenomenal experience is inherent in the nature of things. Although it is the cause of obstacles, yet it is necessary in order to kindle the spark of Self-consciousness into full activity. . . .

The fruit of right poise is the capacity to remain balanced between the pairs of opposites.

In these four aphorisms he has put forward the essence of our whole position : that the meaning and *raison d'être* of the opposites is the Tao or Purusha ; that the opposites cannot be called unreal and set against the Purusha (as real) ; that the real Self is confused with the false self, the ego, false because only one of the opposites, that the ego tries to make itself the centre instead of the Purusha, and that this conflict is a necessary stage in our evolution ; finally, that the union of the opposites when achieved again is not fusion but balance. Further, Patanjali says, "The Purusha is necessary, because the mind cannot be aware of itself as an object. . . . The identification of the consciousness with the Self or Purusha brings awareness of the mind as an object" (IV. 20 and 22). That is to say, the mind as just conscious and unconscious cannot, as we have seen, solve its own problem, but if a new centre

## THE SON OF GOD AND MAN

of consciousness is attained above and between these two opposites, both can then be controlled. One must be careful here not to be misled by Patanjali's terminology. For when he speaks of an identification of consciousness with the Purusha, this does not mean that the conscious, as distinct from the unconscious, *becomes* the Purusha. The conscious in that sense means simply the ego which is known in Indian philosophy as the Lower self. In the same way the unconscious does not signify something into which no form of consciousness can enter. Here we are sadly limited by language and the accepted terminology of modern psychology, and the position can only be grasped if we can recognize a consciousness which can know both the ego and the "unconscious." The term "unconscious" means only that which is unknown *by the ego*, but Yoga implies a Higher Self which is not cut off from the unconscious in this way.<sup>1</sup>

The Purusha, however, is always approached through the ego, for at this stage our consciousness is centred in the ego and it is from there that we take all initiative. Or so we imagine, for with our present knowledge we cannot say how far this initiative is prompted by the unconscious. In any event, the apparent process is an

<sup>1</sup> This "Higher Self" should on no account be confused with what Freud terms the "Super Ego," which is almost equivalent to "conscience." It refers to the moral code, the inhibitions, implanted in man during his earliest childhood, thereafter becoming largely unconscious or what might be called instinctive.

## THE SECOND BIRTH

ascent from the ego to the Purusha combined with a proportionately growing knowledge of the unconscious. For the very first act of relaxing the ego, of accepting the unconscious, implies the birth of something between the two, of the desire to come to terms. It is almost as if the Purusha had itself prompted the desire, just as some say that the love between man and woman is caused by the child's yearning to be born. This is true even in terms of materialism, for love is simply an instrument of Nature's urge to create children. And just as man and woman were once themselves children, so conscious and unconscious are now the twin sexed, differentiated, forms of what was just the child in primitive man, in whom the two were fused. This, then, is the meaning of the Second Birth, for the first was when the human race was in the child-state, when conscious and unconscious were undifferentiated. The race became adult, and the two were split; primitive culture developed into civilization. Thus the task of civilization is to bring about the second birth, to "become again as little children" though not in the sense of a mere return.

In Yoga the task of bringing to birth the new Self, of realizing the Purusha, follows naturally from the first step of relaxing the ego and watching the mind. For as the yogi watches he begins to feel that it is not just the mind which is watching the mind, for it cannot see itself any more than one can see one's own eyes. He begins to sense something beyond his conscious thoughts, something which is more than himself

## THE SON OF GOD AND MAN

as he understands himself. He realizes gradually that it is not himself but this Other which is bringing the unconscious to light. As the rush of thoughts begins in time to grow quiet and the unconscious flows forth less violently than at the first bursting of the dam, he begins to see both aspects of his mind together. The one is made up of things peculiar to himself, being his character, his mental personality; it is distinguished from the other aspect just as his body is distinguished from the material universe. The other is a vast collection of things which may be called the mental universe, hitherto for the most part unconscious. It contains what Jung describes as the "archetypes," the bases of all myths, and all those tendencies and impressions which belong to humanity in general. He can know these two aspects together because, through the acceptance of the one by the other, the Purusha has been realized standing, as it were, above and between them, and looking down on both.

In this way the yogi attains the state of *kaivalya*, of complete spiritual freedom and detachment. The world of opposites does not cease to exist, but, centred in the Purusha, he is no longer bound by it. In the words of the *Bhagavad Gita* (V. 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11) :

He should be known as a perpetual sannyasin who neither hateth nor desireth; free from the pairs of opposites, O mighty-armed, he is easily set free from bondage. . . .

He who is harmonized by Yoga, the Self-purified, Self-ruled, the senses subdued, whose Self is the Self of all beings, although acting he is not affected.

"I do not do anything," should think the harmonized one, who

## AT THE CENTRE OF THE WHEEL

knoweth the Essence of things ; seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing.

Speaking, giving, grasping, opening and closing the eyes, he holdeth : "The senses move among the objects of the senses."

He who acteth, placing all actions in the Eternal, abandoning attachment, is unaffected by sin as a lotus leaf by the waters.

Yogis, having abandoned attachment, perform action only by the body, by the intellect, by the intuition, and even by the senses, for the purification of the self.

He acts and feels, as it were, only in the lower part of himself ; the rim of the wheel revolves, but the hub at its very centre remains unmoved. In the same way we find it said in the *Vimalakirti Sutra* of Mahayana Buddhism :

Meditation (lit. "sitting quietly") should mean that while remaining in supreme contemplation, one is able to do the various bodily movements such as walking, standing, sitting or reclining. It should mean that without deviating from the Dharma, one is able to discharge various temporal duties. It should mean that one abides neither within nor without. . . . It should mean that without exterminating *klesas* (defilements or contacts with the world of opposites), one may enter Nirvana.

Hence Nirvana in Buddhism is the equivalent of *kaivalya* in Yoga. It is not just a complete absorption into the Infinite, with eyes closed and body immobile and all thoughts cleared from the mind. For the passage quoted above was supposed to have been Vimalakirti's reproof to Saraputra when he found him sitting in a wood absorbed in a state which may best be described in Saraputra's own words, "This precisely is bliss—that there is no consciousness." Indeed, the idea that Nirvana consists in mere unconsciousness is not only found

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in the West. For we find the Chinese Buddhist sage Hui Neng correcting the same mistake in a collection of sermons delivered during the T'ang dynasty :<sup>1</sup>

The capacity of Mind is wide and great ; it is like the emptiness of space. To sit with a mind emptied makes one fall into emptiness of indifference. Space contains the sun, moon, stars, constellations, great earth, mountains and rivers. All grasses, plants, good men and bad men, . . . Heaven and hell—they are all in empty space. The emptiness of (Self-) nature as it is in all people is just like this. It contains in it all objects ; hence it is great. All objects without exception are of Self-nature. Seeing all human beings and non-human beings, as they are, evil and good, . . . it abandons them not, nor is it contaminated with them ; it is like the emptiness of space. . . . There are people who conceive this to be great when they have their minds emptied of thoughts—which is not right. The capacity of Mind is great ; when there is no life accompanying it it is small.

It is probable, however, that in realizing the Purusha or Nirvana there are various levels of attainment. For in all things there are deeper and deeper "layers" of meaning. Thus we of the West may find a Purusha in the ordinary affairs of life by applying the principles of Eastern psychology on our earthly plane of being. But this does not necessarily involve the attainment of Buddhahood—a task so tremendous that it is impossible for us to conceive it. To understand the ultimate, universal Purusha it is necessary to know levels of consciousness and being of which we have no inkling. This knowledge is the object of the more advanced exercises in Yoga and of the various forms of Eastern

<sup>1</sup> From the *Tau-Ching* (Platform Sutra), 24 and 25, translated by D. T. Suzuki.

## ONE WORLD AT A TIME

occultism with which it is allied. For the present, however, we have no means to affirm or doubt the existence of these supra- and sub-mundane realms which are mentioned so freely in the sutras. What must concern us is the principle and not the level of its application. That is to say, we must apply it to the world we know before we try to discover any new world by the development of psychic faculties. The animal applies the Tao in sex but not in music, and because a man applies it in music it does not follow that he can apply it in his ordinary life. But beyond what we know as ordinary life, there may well be planes as unknown to us as literature to horses. Buddhahood implies the capacity to apply the Dharma, the Tao, on all planes, and thus it is a question which at the present time simply does not enter into our lives and concerning which we are quite incapable of giving any opinion. The sutras enter into it very fully, but much of this is purely unintelligible to us ; it is a knowledge which the East has reached in the fullness of its years. For ourselves, any attempt to copy or deny it is an impertinence ; it is like assuming equality with Cicero when one has only mastered the first Declension. The superiority of the East in these matters is often scorned by our "wise men," but every great scientist exhibits a profound humility not only on what he does not understand, but also on what he thinks he knows. He has to change his opinions so often that he avoids the pride of knowledge as his worst enemy. In the words of Chuang Tzu, "He who knows he is a fool is not a

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great fool." Let us remember, therefore, that for us the important thing in Asia's legacy is not the "signs and wonders" offered to us by irresponsible writers on Yoga, but the underlying principle of the Middle Way, of the redemption of our ordinary life through understanding of the Tao.

This, then, is the birth of the Holy Child, and once again we find a new meaning in the Christian symbol. For Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The Church preserves this in the sacrament of Baptism, which for some strange reason is administered to newborn babes—a remarkable instance of confusing the letter with the spirit. For the little child to which Jesus referred comes after, not before, the adult, and it seems that water and the spirit signify the opposites out of which the Christ is born. We are told in the book of Genesis that before the world was made "the *Spirit* of God moved upon the face of the *waters*," and that out of these two, formless in themselves, was created the world of forms as if the spirit had entered into the water and reared up waves. For spirit is the active male, and water the passive female, meaningless in themselves and yet given meaning by that which is produced from their union. In the same way, pure energy is nothing, for it expands infinitely and to no purpose. Pure matter is nothing, for it is shapeless and dead. But when the two are brought together, matter places a check upon energy, and energy moves matter, with the result that the two give birth to form.

## OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT

Hence it is of the greatest significance that Christ was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, for it cannot be merely by chance that Mary suggests *mare* (Lat. "sea") and the phrase "virgin matter." The Buddha, also, was miraculously conceived, and curiously enough his mother was called Maya. Thus, descending from the Sanskrit root *ma-*, the words *mater*, *materia*, *Maya*, *mare*, *Maria* (Gk. *Magn*), present a suggestive group. But even if their similarity is purely fortuitous, the meaning of the symbol in its context is clear. The Spirit enters into the virgin woman, and woman is matter, the female principle, the mother of the world, and from the union of the opposites is born the Christ.

Therefore it is only from the position of the Christ that the problem of the opposites can be solved, that the curse of Adam can be redeemed. In this way man can be released from the spiritual and moral impasse of a life considered simply in terms of good and evil, conscious and unconscious, life and death. For he acts no longer in accordance with one or other of the opposites, but with the meaning, the Tao, which transcends them. His virtue is more than virtue as it is generally understood, which is to say, contrasted with vice. Ordinary virtue is at pains to emphasize that it *is* virtuous, but in the words of Lao Tzu :

The superior virtue is not conscious of itself as virtue ;  
Therefore it has virtue.  
The inferior virtue never lets off virtue ;  
Therefore it has no virtue.

(*Trans. Ch'u Ta-koao.*)

## THE SON OF GOD AND MAN

From the standpoint of Tao there is no question of actions being good or evil ; in fact the Chinese word here translated "virtue" is *Tē*, which signifies Tao working in man. For the man of Tao is not concerned with making good triumph over evil ; his whole attention is absorbed in working out a meaning. To return once more to the reading analogy : what concerns him is not how well or how badly he concentrates on reading a book, but the actual work of reading. Thus he concentrates well, yet that is not his object ; it is merely incidental.

This is demonstrated further by the attitude of Yoga to concentration. Obviously the attainment of the Purusha or the Tao is no easy task. Paradoxically, it requires a tremendous force not only to make the first relaxation of the ego but to maintain it and overcome the ego's long ingrained habit of trying to make itself supreme. For this reason Yoga contains innumerable exercises in concentration and self-discipline. But these are entirely defeated if looked upon as ends in themselves, and for this reason the *guru* will frown upon any desire to practise Yoga simply for the power of concentration which it gives. For concentration is no matter of asserting the ego, of trying to force one's attention on a given subject. This simply aggravates the conflict between the ego and the world, perpetuating the discord of the two opposites good and bad concentration. Thus the more one thinks of oneself trying to read, the less one succeeds in reading. In the same way, the man of Tao does not trouble as to how well

## WHEN FAILURE COMES OF TRYING

or how badly *he* is living *life*; he just lives life. That is not to say that he drifts on circumstance any more than he is utterly carried away by what he reads in his book. Life for him is the relationship, the meaning, between himself and the world; it is the process of himself working in the universe and the universe working in him. He is so absorbed in this that he forgets himself as a separate thing and the universe as a separate thing, just as a musician will forget both himself and his instrument and think only of the tune. Here again, those who make a great effort, who try to be sure that *they* are playing the instrument well, spoil the tune by their self-consciousness. The secret is to think of the tune and let it play itself; that the player plays well follows as a consequence and does not come first as a cause. Hence there is no virtue without Grace, without Christ being born in the soul.

#### IV. THE SECRET OF THE BEARDED BARBARIAN

**A**LTHOUGH we no longer bow down to wood and stone, and even though we regard it as a form of idolatry to worship ourselves, we still have our idols. As idols, they are little better than wood and stone, and somewhat worse than ourselves. Obviously the maker is more than what he makes, and to worship an image of stone fashioned by one's own hands is clearly folly, whereas to take pride in oneself for making it is understandable. The things we create have our own limitations with this added disadvantage : that once created they cannot of themselves overcome those limitations. For man's works are his mirror, and if he worships them, he worships what is less than himself—his own reflection. There is little difference, therefore, between the man who makes himself an idol of stone and he who makes an idol of thought. Everyone is well aware of the evils of making a God of one's belly, but it does not seem to be understood that it is an equal folly to make a God of one's mind. For both are our servants and serve us well when treated as servants. But as masters they lead us to ruin. Much is said of the folly of allowing our senses to run away with us, but it is seldom that anyone says the same thing of our sense. In the capacity for rational thought we see "the means of Grace and the hope of Glory," and so much do we rely on it that

## IDOLS OF THOUGHT

we are as much the victims of our ideas as the glutton of his appetites. That is not to say that they are not good ideas ; the sculptor may make a good image and the glutton may also be something of a gourmet, but the difficulty is that the better the ideas, the better the image and the better the meal, the greater is the temptation to idolatry. Modern man has evolved a remarkable number of good ideas, but just because they are so good he is especially inclined to forget that they are his own creations and not his creator. It is often said that many of our problems in this age are caused by lack of thought ; it would be more correct to say that they are caused by too much thought, for we deceive ourselves by our own cleverness. In thought we have found a process capable of the most astonishing achievements, just as the glutton finds in his belly a source of the most delicious sensations ; the achievements and the sensations are both perfectly legitimate so long as they are kept under control. But the more astonishing the achievements and the more delicious the sensations, the more the mind and the belly take on the aspect of divinity ; we bow to them in gratitude and adoration, whereupon our lives are surrendered to our servants. Instead of thinking our thoughts, our thoughts think us, and in ideas, systems, organizations and technique we see the salvation of the world.

It is, however, in religion that the worship of the idea attacks us in the most subtle form and that our minds are especially apt to run away with us. For the more skilfully we work out the philosophy of our religion,

## THE SECRET OF THE BEARDED BARBARIAN

the more we are tempted to rely on it. It is one thing to satisfy one's intellect with well-constructed ideas, or to satisfy one's emotions with sublime rites and symbols, but quite another to transmute ideas or feelings *about* Truth into Truth itself. It is the difference between thinking (or feeling) and being ; between talking about religion and living it. Moreover, it is not simply a question of practising what one preaches. One may practise for years, in the sense of following out some technique, without coming any nearer to the Goal. For religion does not consist in actions any more than it consists in thoughts and feelings so long as they are only "about it and about." That is to say, the Tao, the Holy Child, is not brought to birth by deep philosophical understanding or by any effort of action or emotion, although it is necessary and inevitable that one of these attempts should precede the birth. The birth itself, however, only takes place when the futility of the attempt has been fully realized, and that realization can only come through making the attempt. For the paradox is that we are living the Tao all the time, and that to search after it is like looking all over the house for the shoes on one's feet. That is to say, the conflict between the opposites is *maya*, illusion. However much we may imagine ourselves cut off and separated from life as a whole, however much we may imagine a conflict between ourselves and the universe, the truth is that we *are* life, that in every thought and action we are unconsciously expressing the Tao ; otherwise we should simply cease to exist. We exist because we live and

## "BECOME WHAT YOU ARE"

die, because there is a universe as well as ourselves ; from these opposites and from all others life proceeds and life is the Tao. There is no avoiding it, no coming to meet it ; it *is*.

Thus religion is a matter of "becoming what we are," and while thought, feeling and action may lead us some way towards it as in the Three Yogas, we realize eventually that in spite of all our efforts there was really nothing to strive for, that we have been at the Goal all the time. But although there is in fact no division between ourselves and the Tao, we must understand the division before we can understand the unity. To use an analogy, it is like a man who has never seen his own face ; he cannot look at it because it is his own, and then someone holds up a mirror before him. At first he thinks someone else is looking at him from the mirror and begins to be mystified and worried. At length he discovers that it was himself all the time and realizes that after all it was absurd to be so concerned about the creature in the mirror. In the same way, philosophy is the mirror which shows us a difference between ourselves and the Tao, which makes us think about establishing a union between the two. Thus we begin to search in philosophy for this mysterious Tao, when suddenly we find that we have it all the time. But there is this difference between the time before we had the mirror and the time after our realization : that before, our union with the Tao was purely unconscious, that our life was purely instinctive (*participation mystique*) ; when the mirror is held up, an apparent division is made

## THE SECRET OF THE BEARDED BARBARIAN

—we are conscious but in conflict ; but after the realization the union becomes conscious. Hence the words of St. Paul : " For now we see through a glass, darkly ; but then face to face : now I know in part ; but then shall I know even as I am known."

Therefore there comes a time in the pursuit of religion when we realize that ideas and words can carry us no farther. We see that all our efforts to know the Tao are of no avail, for the more we *try* to know it, the more our very effort to know stands in the way. For the actual consciousness that one is trying at once presupposes a distinction between oneself and the Tao. Philosophically we may understand that Tao is the meaning, the relationship, between ourselves and the universe and between all other opposites, and we know that to live in harmony we must concentrate on this meaning. But it seems impossible to concentrate, for not only does the effort turn our attention back on ourselves, but also the Tao itself seems so ill-defined, so elusive, so abstract. But perhaps the reason is mainly that we are looking for the Tao in the wrong place. Philosophy has to express it as a third concept mediating between opposites, but this is misleading because it still makes us think of it as something outside and apart from ourselves. But we have to understand that the Tao is in no way apart from the opposites, that, indeed, it *is* the opposites, but the opposites considered together in meaningful relationship. In short, Tao is no abstraction, no " spiritual essence," no " inner light "—all these terms mislead and make it something other than ourselves. Someone came

## USUAL LIFE IS TAO

to a Chinese sage and asked, "What is the Tao?"—"Usual life," he replied, "is the very Tao."—"If that is so," he was asked again, "how do we bring ourselves into accord with it?"—"If you *try* to accord with it, you will get away from it." This is, perhaps, not very helpful, but the sage has mentioned something of everyday experience, a problem which all have to face.

This problem is the difference between "What" and "How," between what to do and how to do it. That is to say, you can teach a person the technique of painting, but you cannot teach him how to be a Leonardo. You can tell him exactly what he must do, you can provide him with all the text-books in the world, but not one will teach him the secret of great art. In the same way, you may provide him with all the books on religion and philosophy in the world but none will teach him wisdom. Technique gives one the means of expressing what one already has within; it does not give one the thing to be expressed and no artist, musician or sage can find any words to convey to others that unknown quantity which makes their work more than mere technique. And so often does one meet with religion that is mere technique, mere observance of the moral law, mere intellectual understanding, mere emotion, mere fruitless effort. It seems tragic that there should be so much earnest searching and so little enlightenment. This problem has faced every civilized people, and Christianity has provided something near to a solution—the gift of Divine Grace, freely given to all who ask in sincerity and humility. This gift makes religion some-

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thing more than technique, and enables ordinary mortals to achieve something of the religious genius of Christ. There is absolutely no doubt that for many this solution has been wholly effective; whether there is or is not a Loving God, certain people have asked Him for Grace in this way, and whether from Him or from out of themselves, they obtained something which transformed their lives, which made their religion real. There appear, however, to be two difficulties in the way of this solution. The first, which has already been considered, is that it rests upon belief and thus excludes those who either cannot believe or believe differently. The second is that, though in the end the solution may be fully effective, the belief complicates it unnecessarily and is apt to distort the religious experience. We only say this because in Asia there was evolved an equally if not more effective solution which does not require any particular belief, which apparently produces as near as possible a pure religious experience independent of any form of theology or philosophy.

That is not to say that it does not matter what one believes, but before the question of belief can be understood we have to distinguish between theology and religion. Religion in itself is a pure experience which no form of words or ideas can embrace or convey to others. Theology interprets that experience just as science interprets the experience of our ordinary senses. But theology can no more produce the experience than science can make us feel the beauty of a flower. Theology cannot give us Divine Grace, and can no more

## THEOLOGY AS SCIENCE

describe Grace than physical beauty can be described in scientific terms. Moreover, it is as unwise to mix religion with theology as beauty with science, for just as our perception of beauty may be dimmed by absorption in "reflex actions," "sense mechanisms" and "nervous responses," so also our understanding of religion may be obscured by pre-occupation with ideas about the Trinity, the Last Judgement and the nature of the soul. In the words of Prof. Whitehead :<sup>1</sup>

When you understand all about the sun and all about the atmosphere and all about the rotation of the earth, you may still miss the radiance of the sunset. There is no substitute for the direct perception of the concrete achievement of a thing in its actuality. We want concrete fact with a high light thrown on what is relevant to its preciousness.

But theology is important as science is important. For its value is in interpreting religious experience, in showing its relation to the rest of life, in explaining its necessity to right living, in deriving from it, as far as is possible, a hypothetical explanation of universal mysteries to satisfy man's innate and legitimate curiosity. But, in the course of its history, the Christian religious experience has become too involved with theology ; the discovery of the fact has been made too dependent on belief in the theory. In other words, thinking of the experience in terms of theology has distorted it in the same way that science may distort our view of beauty. Our appreciation of Bach is not perceptibly increased by an analysis of the audic nerve and the structure of

<sup>1</sup> *Science and the Modern World* (London, 1933), p. 248.

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the brain, nor does botany tell us why we find any particular charm in the daffodil. But if we are so absorbed in science that we can only think of beauty in terms of brain-cells or artistic technique, we shall resemble those who are so absorbed in theology, in belief, that they can only think of the religious experience in terms of dogma or philosophy. In this condition the belief becomes an idol instead of a servant ; we begin to fear anything which might shake it, and abstain from all mental adventure ; we refuse experiences that contradict it, not because there is evidence against them, but because there is a theory against them. Yet thought *follows* experience, and it is vain to imagine that we shall be made wise for our much thinking.

Yet whereas the Christian religious experience is achieved in terms of a belief about something beyond this world, there is a particular Buddhist experience achieved in terms of this life as we know it. Christianity has found it almost impossible to preserve its original experience from the distortion of mis-applied theology, whereas there is still a form of Buddhism which has passed on the Buddha's Enlightenment without any philosophical or symbolic intermediary. In the end both Christianity and Buddhism arrive at the same Goal, but the former goes by a roundabout route and the latter, in this particular instance, direct ; it grasps the experience immediately, understanding it without allowing any ideas *about* it to come between the knower and the known. This is perhaps the most unique of Asia's contributions to religion. All other cults present the religious ex-

## THE LIVING BUDDHISM

perience in some particular guise, in terms of some special practice or belief outside our everyday experience. But this one alone points directly at life, leaves theology out of consideration, and finds the secret which we looked for afar lying right at our feet. This cult is known by the name of Zen (Chinese : Ch'an), and it is generally regarded as a form of Buddhist quietism, as something of use only to those who can spare the time to retire from the world and devote their lives to deep contemplation. But this misunderstanding is in part the result of a misleading name, for the word Zen is the Japanese equivalent of the Sanskrit Dhyana, always understood as a state of profound meditation. For the word is usually associated with the practice of Yoga, with sitting cross-legged in meditation and entering into what is loosely described as a trance. Yoga practices are certainly found in Zen, but in a strictly subordinate capacity. But to understand Zen as a method of meditation is wholly erroneous. Only in recent years has the history of Zen been made known to us, and this is due in the main to the work of Dr. D. T. Suzuki of Kyoto who has taken the trouble to translate many of its texts into English and to give the West some sort of interpretation of a subject which would otherwise have remained an impenetrable mystery.

In the light of Dr. Suzuki's work there can be no doubt whatever that Zen Buddhism has had more influence than any other cult in the shaping of Far-Eastern culture. The supreme creations of Chinese and Japanese art did not owe their inspiration merely to the ethics of Con-

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fucius nor even to the subtle mysticism of Lao Tzu. The West knew of Confucius and Lao Tzu long before it knew of Zen, not because they were more important, but because Zen in comparison seemed incomprehensible. It was regarded as a highly abstruse system of metaphysics which could only have had a limited following. But now we know that Zen was anything but metaphysics, and so far from having only a limited following, it was not only the inspiration of T'ang and Sung art but the popular religion of the Japanese samurai for several hundred years. Far-Eastern culture without Zen is almost as unintelligible as European culture without Christianity. It is not simply a form of Buddhism; rather it is the fruit of Buddhism, the final development of the Mahayana, the Chinese synthesis of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. Buddhism began with the Buddha's Enlightenment, with a spiritual experience which he could not describe in words, which was the secret of his genius. It developed as a complex system of ideas about this experience and practices calculated to achieve it. It was completed in a return to the source from which it came, to the pure experience freed from all its trappings. For Zen is just that Enlightenment, or what the Christian understands as Grace, with this difference: that whereas Grace has a theological association, Zen is just Zen and cannot be understood in any philosophical terms.

At the beginning of the Christian Era Buddhism was gradually entering into China and was influencing and being influenced by the two native religions—Con-

fucianism and Taoism. In A.D. 405 Kumarajiva was translating the scriptures of Mahayana Buddhism from Sanskrit into Chinese, and in the following years the pilgrim Fa-hien visited India and collected further scriptures. There was at first persecution of the new religion, but its popularity increased. As Buddhism began to die out through persecution in India, many of its adherents took refuge north of the Himalayas—in Tibet and China, until finally in 527 the Buddha's twenty-eighth successor arrived in China, the Patriarch Bodhidharma. From all accounts it is clear that Bodhidharma must have been an unusually remarkable person. Other teachers might be profound philosophers or models of righteousness, but here was someone who had true religious insight, who knew the secret of Enlightenment itself. Of Bodhidharma we know little, but his greatness must be judged from the effects of his teaching. For the Chinese must have encountered this problem of bridging the gap between mere philosophy and true Enlightenment, and in Bodhidharma they saw one who had the secret which no words can convey. The Chinese, being a practical people, were determined to learn this secret; they recognized it as the one thing, lacking which, scriptures, rites, observances and ideas were just empty forms. Hence one of the stock questions which Zen disciples ask their masters is: "What was the secret message of the Bearded Barbarian (Bodhidharma)?"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Barbarian" was of course a term applied by the Chinese to all foreigners. The well-defined features and bearded faces of the Indians naturally appeared somewhat grotesque to the Chinese mind,

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At first there were only a few who were anxious to learn this secret, and, when he had obtained sufficient proof of their earnestness, Bodhidharma accepted them as disciples. One of them learnt the secret and became his successor, and so it was passed down through a line of six Patriarchs. By this time the fame of Bodhidharma had spread, and the last few Patriarchs had collected together large communities of disciples, so much so that the sixth, Hui Neng, managed to pass it on to several others. From that time forward it spread rapidly. Hui Neng died towards the end of the T'ang dynasty, and in the following periods of Sung and Yüan (713-1367) the Zen School attained tremendous strength. This period of the supremacy of Zen coincided with the Golden Age of Chinese culture when art and literature were in their prime and had not descended into the elaborate prettiness of the Ming and later dynasties. Towards the end of the Twelfth Century Zen passed on to Japan, to be followed in a few decades by a similar awakening of culture.<sup>1</sup>

and hence all the pictures of Bodhidharma by Chinese and Japanese artists represent him as a fierce and uncouth creature with a bushy beard. In his fierce appearance there is, however, something characteristic of Zen as will be seen from the following pages.

<sup>1</sup> For full details of the influence of Zen on the culture of the Far East see Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, Vol. III, last chap., London and Kyoto, 1934; Suzuki, *Buddhism and the Japanese Love of Nature*, London, 1936; Suzuki, *Buddhism in the Life and Thought of Japan*, London, 1937; Ernst Grossc, *Die Ostasiatische Tuschmalerei*, Berlin, 1923; Okakura, *The Book of Tea*, Edinburgh, 1919; Binyon, *The Flight of the Dragon*, London, 1923; Gatenby, *The*

## LOOKING FOR THE OX

But what was the secret message of Bodhidharma which had such astonishing results? Perhaps it will be best to give the answer in the words of the Zen masters themselves. One of them simply answered, "The cypress tree in the courtyard." Another said:

"Wait until there is nobody around us and I will tell you."

Master and disciple then walked around the fields until they were alone. Then the disciple asked:

"Nobody is around here now; pray tell me, O master, about the secret of Bodhidharma."

The master pointed at a bamboo and said, "How tall this bamboo is," and pointing at another, "and how short that one!"

A question to the same effect is "What is the first principle of Buddhism?" or "What is the Buddha?" or simply a request for instruction. Thus Master Hyakujo (Chinese: Pai-chang) was asked:

"I have been seeking for the Buddha, but do not yet know how to go on with my research."

Hyakujo replied: "It is very much like looking for an ox when you are riding on one."

Kwaido (Hui-t'ang) was once asked about Zen by a learned Confucian. He replied that there was a saying of Confucius' which gave the answer: "Do you think I am holding something back from you, O my disciples? Indeed, I have held nothing back from you."

*Cloud Men of Yamato*, London, 1929; Cranmer-Byng, *The Vision of Asia*, London, 1935; Watts, *The Spirit of Zen*, Chap. V, London, 1936; Chiang Yee, *The Chinese Eye*, London, 1935.

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The Confucian was sadly puzzled, but some time afterwards they were walking together in the mountains, and as they passed a sweetly scented bush of wild laurel Kwaïdo asked, "Do you smell it?"

When the Confucian answered that he did, Kwaïdo exclaimed, "There, I have kept nothing back from you!" And at that moment the Confucian understood the whole secret.

Joshu (Chao-chou) was once asked: "When the body crumbles all to pieces and returns to the dust, there eternally abides one thing. Of this I have been told, but where does this one thing abide?"

Joshu answered: "It is windy again this morning."

The following story is interesting as an example of the Zen attitude to ideas, to teachings in books.

Yeh-hsien was asked: "Is it advisable to read the scriptures or not?"

He replied: "There are no by-roads, no cross-roads, here; the hills all the year round are fresh and green; east or west, in whichever direction, you may have a fine walk."

Master Wên was interviewing a new disciple and asked:

"Where do you come from?"

"From Ta-yang."

"Where were you last summer?"

"At Ta-kuci."

"Where is your home?"

"At Hsing-yüan Fu."

Suddenly Wên held out his hand and asked: "How

"ALL IS PERFECTLY OPEN TO YOU"

is it that my hand is so much like the Buddha's hand ? "

The disciple did not know what to say, so the master continued : " So far your answers have been splendidly natural and easy ; and what obstructions do you feel now that I ask you about my hand resembling the Buddha's ? "

" I fail," said the disciple, " to see the point."

" All is perfectly open to you, and there is nothing specially for you to perceive."

At these words the disciple suddenly grasped the whole truth of Zen.

Master Tao-wu was asked by a disciple : " Since I came to you, I have not been instructed at all."

The master replied : " Ever since you came to me, I have always been pointing to you how to study."

" In what way, sir ? "

" When you brought me a cup of tea, did I not accept it ? When you served me with food, did I not partake of it ? When you made bows to me, did I not return them ? When did I ever neglect in giving you instructions ? "

The disciple was more mystified than ever, so Tao-wu said again : " If you want to see, see directly into it ; but when you try to think about it, it is altogether missed."

This must seem a peculiar, if not nonsensical, way of teaching religion, and yet from records which there is good reason to trust and from the experience of people living to-day we may know that it " works." For

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these apparently fatuous remarks now and then succeed in passing on the secret of Bodhidharma, the Enlightenment which he had inherited from the Buddha himself. The result is that the disciple has his whole attitude to life changed, that he lives in the freedom and fullness of the spirit. Yet it hardly seems possible that these sayings have anything to do with religion. For in answer to religious questions the masters make remarks about ordinary mundane affairs, about the weather, eating and drinking, the trees and the flowers. There is little reference to the Buddha, to Nirvana or to any of the accepted principles of the Buddhist religion. One master even went so far as to make the following extraordinary statement: "Nirvana and Enlightenment are dead stumps to tie your donkey to. The twelve divisions of the scriptures are only lists of ghosts and sheets of paper fit to wipe the dirt from your skin. And all your four merits and ten stages are mere ghosts lingering in their decaying graves. Can these have anything to do with your salvation?" In fact, Zen seems to turn the accepted idea of religion upside-down; what is usually considered worldly and trivial it seems to exalt; what is considered divine and holy it seems to ignore. Perhaps our first reaction, if it is not to dismiss the whole thing as lunacy, is to look for some deep symbolic meaning in these sayings. But this will not help, for though symbolism is sometimes used it is only superficial. For their meaning is really obvious, so obvious in fact that it is difficult to see. "It is like looking for an ox when you are riding on one." The disciple asks a serious religious

## "TO LIVE IS CHRIST"

question, expecting some profound answer, whereat the master points at something straight in front of him. It may be that after some time the master is able to make the disciple see what he means, and at that moment he experiences *satori*—the sudden flash of Enlightenment which reveals the whole mystery of life. He suddenly finds that what he has been seeking in ideas, in books, in good conduct, in meditation, has been with him all the time, that he has been like a stupid dog chasing its own tail. "Nothing is left to you at this moment," writes a Zen master, "but to have a good laugh."

St. Paul remarks in the Epistle to the Philippians, "For to me to live is Christ" and in the same way a Zen master has said, "Usual life is the very Tao." Or again, another has said that Zen means simply "Eat when you are hungry, sleep when you are tired." The disciples are bewildered and ask, "Is that *all*?" For they are too proud; they imagine religion as something abstruse and difficult, that they have to make themselves unusually clever and wise and good before they can understand it. But Christianity also says that if you imagine that the Grace of God is offered to you because you are especially good, you suffer from one of the greatest sins—spiritual pride. Zen does not want us to think at all about the "I" who must come into accord with the Tao, for this at once makes a division between the two. It wants us to understand that to live is Tao, and that the moment we seek the Tao we go round in circles like the dog after its tail. In fact, it is perhaps misleading to bring the idea of the Tao into the matter

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at all, for it so easily becomes a form of idolatry. Thus the Zen masters do not talk about the Tao ; they just demonstrate it. It is as if, instead of telling us to listen to a tune, they just play it ; one thing is of importance—the tune, the Tao, life—and any idea of oneself listening or oneself living immediately separates one from it.

Master Goso once said to a disciple : “ You are all right, but you have a trivial fault.”

The disciple asked what this was, and Goso replied : “ You have altogether too much of Zen.”

“ Why,” the disciple objected, “ if one is studying Zen at all, don't you think it the most natural thing for one to be talking of it ? ”

“ When it is like an ordinary everyday conversation,” said Goso, “ it is somewhat better.”

Someone who was standing by asked : “ Why do you specially hate talking about Zen ? ”

“ Because it turns one's stomach.”

Thus when the master replied to a question, “ It is windy again this morning ” here was an ordinary everyday conversation—a remark full of Zen, expressing the greatest truth of religion. When we dress in the morning, eat our breakfast, shake hands with a friend, walk upstairs, this is all full of Zen. It is worth more than all the sacred scriptures in the world put together, for what are they other than enormous commentaries about and about this one thing which is life ? At this very moment all of us are living Zen, and the only difference between ourselves and the great sages is that they realize

## GOING STRAIGHT AHEAD

it and we do not. Hence the words of the Zen poet Hokoji (P'ang-yün) :

How wondrously supernatural  
And how miraculous this,—  
I draw water and I carry fuel !

In the same way Master Rinzai (Lin-chi) has said : " The truly religious man has nothing to do but go on with his life as he finds it in the various circumstances of his worldly existence. He rises quietly in the morning, puts on his clothes and goes out to work. When he wants to walk, he walks ; when he wants to sit, he sits. He has no hankering after Buddhahood, not the remotest thought of it. How is this possible ? A wise man of old has said, ' If you strive after Buddhahood by any conscious contrivances, your Buddha is indeed the source of eternal misery.' " But to think that Zen is just not thinking about things is to go wrong again, for thoughts are just as much life and Tao as anything else. Hence when a master was asked, " What is *satori* ? " he replied, " Your everyday thoughts. " In short, it is quite useless to try to define Zen at all ; Zen is life, and to try to define it is to stand away from it, to stop while the living stream moves on, leaving us high and dry. Here again we see that if our immediate task is to play a tune, the moment we begin to analyse it, to think about ourselves playing it, it is lost. Moreover, it does not help us much to find the tune if we begin to talk about it, to philosophize, to think about the necessity of devoting our whole attention to it. It is here that ideas fail, and here that Zen succeeds, for Zen just demonstrates the tune.

## THE SECRET OF THE BEARDED BARBARIAN

What puzzles us so much when we are confronted with Zen is that we are shown the Tao itself and do not recognize it when we see it. It is as if we went into a concert hall expecting to hear the orchestra discussing the right way to play a symphony and were astonished to hear music. We may read a hundred books on Beethoven without having the least idea of his Seventh Symphony, and when we hear it we may well be somewhat at a loss to find any connection between it and what we read in the books. In the same way we may have a hundred ideas, a hundred feelings, about life and yet know nothing of life itself. To return to the analogy of the mirror: the Zen master holds a mirror up in front of our faces and we do not recognize them, never having seen them. Again we see that religion is a matter of becoming what we are, and if we are to succeed we must forget the becoming in looking at the "are." Our difficulty is that we are at once utterly right and utterly wrong; we say, "I live" and the Zen master also says, "I live." The difference is that we have a barrier between the "I" and the "live" whereas he has not.

But it is useless to pursue the subject any farther with words. Words mean different things to different people; two people may mean the same thing and yet misunderstand each other through looking for each other's meaning in the words used. If the secret of great art cannot be conveyed in words, how much less can the secret of Zen. "It is like drinking water," says a master, "and knowing for yourself that it is cool." We may look all over the world for Zen; we may

## THERE IS NO SECRET

understand that ordinary life is Zen, but we may yet fail through looking for Zen in ordinary life. For that is like looking for a stone in a stone. If we seek the Tao in life we miss it because while we are so busily searching for the Tao we miss life, which is the Tao. Perhaps we are then just to sit still and look for nothing at all. But even if we look for Zen in that, we shall not find it. Zen says neither "Look!" nor "Do not look!"; it does not divert our attention from the Tao by telling us to find by not seeking, for this is only another way of trying to find. To explain life only confuses it, because it is already perfectly clear, and the secret is that there is no secret.

This, then, is the chief Eastern alternative to the Christian doctrine of Grace. For in answer to the question "How shall I find the secret?" it points, not to a supernatural Being, but to the life of everyday experience. Instead of asking us to empty ourselves that we may be filled with the Grace of a God in whom we may or may not believe, it asks us to make the same act of relaxation, of "Letting go," to the familiar life in and around us. This is to receive the Tao, for Tao is all or nothing and can only be realized by saying "Yes" to all experience. The paths, though different, lead to a common Goal, and while the same experience is found in perhaps lesser degree in all the great mystical religions of Asia, only in Zen is it set forward alone, free from all symbolic and philosophical associations. That it should baffle and mystify those who are accustomed to understand it in the guise of religious terminology is only to

## THE SECRET OF THE BEARDED BARBARIAN

be expected. But its very independence of religious forms is its supreme value, for whatever religion one may follow one can apply Zen. Whether we believe in God or not, whether we are atheists, pantheists or polytheists, it is all the same to Zen because our idea of the Divine is only a symbol, and Zen passes beyond the symbol. For the Divine becomes as natural as being alive, or in the words of a Zen master: "When we really attain to the doubtless Tao, it will be as clear as the vastness of the sky. What is the necessity of calling it in question then?" So many forms of mysticism only go as far as seeing in all created things the symbols of God. "If thy heart were right," said Thomas à Kempis, "then every creature would be a mirror of life and a book of holy doctrine" or, as it is sometimes said, "sermons in stones and God in everything." This is near to Zen, but Zen just goes one step farther. Let us remember again that famous Zen saying: "To him who knows nothing of Buddhism, mountains are mountains, waters are waters and trees are trees. When he has read the scriptures and knows a little of the doctrine, mountains are to him no longer mountains, waters no longer waters, and trees no longer trees (i.e. they become mere symbols, mere appearances, of the One Reality). But when he is thoroughly enlightened, mountains are once again mountains, waters once again waters, and trees once again trees." Before and after Enlightenment the world is, as the Italians say, *na ca so, na ca anno*—not the same, yet not another. Or as it was shown by a Zen master:

## THE MASTER RAISED HIS STICK

"How were things before the Buddha came into the world ?"

The master raised his stick.

"And how were they after the Buddha came ?"

The master raised his stick.

Jesus said the same thing when he declared that after all our efforts to grow up we must become again as little children. Indeed, "my end is my beginning," but the whole world lies between.

## V. THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

**I**T has been said that there are two kinds of religions, those of Enlightenment and those of Service. At first sight it would seem that the religions of the East belong to the former and of the West to the latter, that in the meditating Buddha we see the ideal of vast Knowledge and in the crucified Christ the ideal of Love. The one appears to concentrate on the creation of mighty individuals, to offer man a destiny of which the West has never dreamed, and the other to humble the individual in the service of all, just as Jesus washed His disciples' feet. It is curious, therefore, that in the East, where religion is supposed to be impersonal, the Goal should be an exaltation of the individual, whereas in the West, where personality is so valued, the individual must account his virtue as nothing beside the goodness of God. It would seem that the ideal of the East is to become God, and the ideal of the West to realize one's very distance from God, according all that is divine and right to Him alone. If religion is a reaction to circumstances, it might be said that the Asiatic is offered the destiny of Buddhahood because in ordinary life the individual is accounted nothing, whereas the European is offered humility because he is naturally individualistic. The meditating Buddha is nothing if not dignified and regal, whereas in the Crucifixion we see the Christ suffering the lowest indignity—the punishment of a thief

## THE BODHISATTVA IDEAL

among thieves. But such generalizations can only be made through lack of knowledge. The West is familiar with the contemplating figure of Buddha, but as yet it knows little of the Bodhisattva ideal of self-sacrifice beside which the generally accepted meaning of the Crucifixion must seem a little pale. As a rule the Bodhisattva is understood as just a lesser kind of Buddha ; in Chinese and Japanese paintings we see these beings standing in attendance round the figures of the great Buddhas, and perhaps this does not help us much to understand the tremendous ideal which they represent. But the terms Buddha, Bodhisattva and Arhat are used somewhat loosely, and to imagine that they refer to various grades of spiritual attainment is as misleading as to imagine that the Christ is a lesser form of God. For although the idea of a Buddha does not correspond to the Christian idea of God, the Bodhisattva is to the Buddha as the Third Person of the Trinity is to the First. That is to say, no difference is made in Christian theology between the Father and the Son ; there are three Persons, but one God, for God is at once the Father of the universe, the Redeemer of man through the Flesh, and the Comforter of man through the Spirit. To save mankind, God took upon Himself human form, suffered all the pains to which that form is subject—even death—whereafter He brought it back to life as a sign that he would do the same for all men. In short, God redeemed humanity by becoming human. For precisely the same purpose a Buddha becomes a Bodhisattva ; he takes upon himself a human body and all the limitations

## THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

attached to it in order that he may likewise save the world. Hence the Buddhist text : " In all the world there is not one spot even so large as a mustard-seed where he has not surrendered his body for the sake of creatures."

But before we can understand just what is implied by the Bodhisattva ideal, we must rid ourselves of this false antithesis between Enlightenment and Service. In the first place, Enlightenment as understood in the Eastern religions is not something which one can attain like a prize *for oneself*. For of all the dangerous traps in religion the most dangerous comes at the end of the search for wisdom ; it is the conceit that one has found it. It is so easy to deceive oneself into the belief that one is the possessor of Grace, of *satori*, of Enlightenment, to imagine that through some kind of spiritual experience one is specially unique among human beings. In the second place, Service is the corollary of Enlightenment, for like all things which are alive and given to us by nature Enlightenment can no more be kept to oneself than a candle can be put under a bushel and continue to burn. To attain Enlightenment is to pass it on to others or to lose it, just as water will become stagnant if it does not flow and as blood will clot if it does not circulate.

Thus the great obstacle to man's union with the Tao is the very thought " I am the Tao." For just as trying to find the Tao separates one from it, so also the idea that one has found it creates again that dualism of " I " and " Tao " which destroys the union. The reason is that the concepts of " trying " and " having " both direct the attention away from the Tao to oneself and encourage the

## "YOUR LIFE IS NOT YOUR OWN"

perilous imagination that one's effort to achieve or one's realization of the Tao is an exaltation of the self. It is like two men listening to a symphony, the one directing his whole attention to it and thinking of the symphony alone, and the other thinking to himself how enlightened he is to be listening to such good music. The latter will naturally hear considerably more of his own thoughts than of the symphony. The one sees the Tao directly, whereas the other looks at its reflection on himself, imagining that he has the Tao in its reflection. Yet he loses it just as the dog in *Æsop's* fable lost its reflected meat in the pool. Therefore Chuang Tzu tells the following story :

Shun asked Ch'eng, saying, "Can one get Tao so as to have it for one's own?"

"Your very body," replied Ch'eng, "is not your own. How should Tao be?"

"If my body," said Shun, "is not my own, pray whose is it?"

"It is the delegated image of Tao," replied Ch'eng. "Your life is not your own. It is the delegated harmony of Tao. Your individuality is not your own. It is the delegated adaptability of Tao. . . . You move, but know not how. You are at rest, but know not why. . . . These are the operation of the laws of Tao. How should you then get Tao so as to have it for your own?"

It is one thing to see the Tao in its reflected glory on oneself, but quite another to look straight at it. In Yoga it is taught that in full concentration there prevails a union between subject and object, seer and seen, just as in listening to music one's thoughts simply are the tune. Hence there is no room for the thought "I am the tune." Once that enters the tune becomes separate from the "I," and the two wander off into different worlds.

## THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

Therefore in listening one forgets that one is listening but remembers the sound. In the same way, to live in Tao is to forget that one is living and to remember life. Indeed, "he that loseth his life shall find it."

The very thought that one is attaining the Tao, being contrary to the great paradox that one has had it all the time, puts one farther away from it than ever. For to imagine that one has become the Tao is to deny it; it is to forget that Tao is universal, that oneself and others have had it always. In the same way, to believe that one has, through especial righteousness, earned the Grace of God is to blaspheme; for it makes one's own righteousness the cause of the gift of Grace, whereas in truth it is offered to saint and sinner alike freely, and to it we owe our existence, not to mention the very capacity for being righteous. To think of oneself finding the Tao or earning the Grace of God is the supreme vanity; it is given alike to the worms and to the dust. To seek after it for oneself is to deny it to them, to deny that it is given universally. It is as much an insult as to ignore a friend's gift and to try to make for oneself what he has given. As is said in the *Tao Tê Ching*:

The great Tao pervades everywhere, both on the left and on the right.

By it all things came into being, and it does not reject them.

Merits accomplished, it does not possess them.

It loves and nourishes all things but does not dominate over them. . . .

Because it never assumes greatness, therefore it can accomplish greatness.

(*Trans. Ch'u Ta-ko.*)

In the same way, he who lays no claim to Tao, who in

## TO CLAIM IS TO LOSE

fact renounces it for himself, is he who is truly in accord with it. For it is by giving it away that we really have it, just as Tao is always giving itself away.

If we are to understand the Tao as the relationship, the meaning, the centre of power, between the opposites, we must avoid the idea that it is in any way apart from the opposites. This laying claim to Tao is no more than creating yet another opposition, another conflict. For he who imagines that in attaining the Tao he has conquered the world of opposites simply makes himself its victim; he sets himself up as God as distinct from the world, and this is to fall back into the old illusion of the world—that one opposite can triumph over another. Thus any thought of victory, of attainment, of having in any way surpassed the world of life and death, creates again another conflict between oneself and that world, and the curse of Adam returns with all its strength. Hence Buddhist and Taoist sages say that in Nirvana and Tao there is nothing to be attained; Nirvana is Sangsara and Tao is the Yin and the Yang. Therefore attainment is no victory over the world; it is just seeing the world as it is. He who is truly enlightened claims no victory and keeps nothing specially for himself at all; he surrenders himself and all that he has to the world, and in that moment he truly becomes the Tao, for Tao is precisely that giving, that passing on, that circulation and movement which is life. "Merits accomplished, it does not possess them." It is only by giving ourselves that we can live; whatever is withheld dies, just as the sun would cease to shine if it held back its rays. To live

## THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

in the Tao is like breathing : to attain it is to renounce it and to renounce it is to attain ; to fill the lungs is to empty them and to empty them is to fill, for unless we are willing to release our breath having taken it we shall become inflated till we burst.

It is of peculiar interest to note how the modern psychologist, travelling along a different path, can arrive at the same understanding as the Buddhist and Taoist sages, to see how, beneath cold scientific study, the ancient doctrine of renunciation appears again with all its force. For in this lies the full significance of Adler's study of the "inferiority complex" and his teaching that most psychological disease is caused by the desire to attain power over others. Thus he who is especially anxious to seem superior is he who is uncomfortably aware of his inferiority. In pride, in all special claims for oneself, Adler sees the symptom of absence of any foundation for those claims. The more one is at pains to emphasize one's virtue, the less actual virtue there is ; the more one emphasizes one's superiority over circumstances, the more one is their slave. Hence cure of this disease can only come from renouncing the claim to superiority and giving the rights of others equal recognition to one's own. To quote the *Tao Tê Ching* again :

The man of highest "power" does not reveal himself as a possessor of "power" ;

Therefore he keeps his "power."

The man of inferior "power" cannot rid it of the appearance of "power" ;

Therefore he is in truth without "power."

(*Trans. Waley.*)

If we would bring Adler's teaching into line with the Christian doctrine of Grace, here is Parker's translation of the same passage :

The highest Grace makes no pose of Grace, and for this reason really is Grace ; whilst the lower quality of Grace may never divest itself of Grace, and yet never feels like true Grace.

For in these words we have the essence of the whole matter ; they represent a principle which applies alike on every plane—the principle that to attain is to renounce, and to renounce is to attain. It is therefore instructive to quote the passage translating it word for word from the Chinese :

High *T'ê* not *T'ê* and thus has *T'ê*, low *T'ê* not lose *T'ê* and thus no *T'ê*.

One is inclined to feel that the literal Chinese is far superior to all "finished" translations. *T'ê* has no one equivalent in English ; it may be rendered as "Grace," "Power," "Virtue," "Wisdom," "Enlightenment," or any exalted quality one may choose, for basically it is just the Tao realized in man. If it does not lose itself, it is not real.

But, as might be expected, of all our leading psychologists it is Jung who has gone most deeply into this particular question.<sup>1</sup> Whereas Adler treats it in the main as the problem of adjusting oneself to the external world, to society, Jung looks inwards and applies the

<sup>1</sup> *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* (trans. H. G. and C. F. Baynes. London, 1928), Part II, Chap. IV.

## THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

very same principle to the adjustment between Conscious and Unconscious. Having described the technique for bringing the contents of the Unconscious to light (see Chap. III), he introduces the primitive idea of the *mana* personality. For *mana* is the occult power of the magician, the medicine man, which Jung uses in relation to "autonomous complexes," to those contents of the Unconscious which override our conscious will. These are the powers which impose on us unwanted moods, which compel us to act in absurd and irrational ways, which are at the root of all those obsessions and impulses which no mere act of conscious reason can defeat. The primitive projects these psychic factors into the forms of gods and demons, whereas civilized man tries to forget that they exist, to regard them as mere weaknesses of his conscious ego which manifest themselves when he "forgets himself." Thus after coming to terms with them, after recognizing them for what they are, they begin to lose their power. They rule us only when we fear or oppose them, but if we give them recognition and allow them to "speak" their mystery and strength vanish away. The primitive believes that to kill a *mana* personality is to take possession of his *mana* oneself, and in the same way the ego which comes to terms with the Unconscious, which overcomes its autonomous psychic factors through recognition, deprives them of their *mana* and takes it to itself. But here is the danger, for if the ego takes possession of this *mana* it becomes inflated; in mystical terminology, it conceives itself as God, as a great sage or magician who is lord of himself. Yet

## THE MANA PERSONALITY

in this it has only become the victim of another and deeper *mana* personality, another archetype or "collective image" which is the hero, the powerful man, of all the ancient myths. According to Jung there are, as it were, hierarchies of these images within the Unconscious, and unless one is careful the recognition of the lesser may easily become possession by the greater. To identify oneself with God means simply that one has not come to terms with the *mana*-image, with the vain dream of being a powerful magician, a master of the world, an inhuman superman. For there is all the difference between living in God and being obsessed by the God-image; the one is indeed Enlightenment while the other is the most pernicious egoism. Therefore he who, through acceptance of the Unconscious, breathes in its *mana* must also breathe it out; otherwise he must suffer spiritual inflation. In Jung's own words:

If the ego arrogates to itself power over the unconscious, the unconscious responds with a subtle attack, in this case with the *mana* personality dominant, the enormous prestige of which casts a spell over the ego. The only protection against this is the fullest confession of one's own weakness over against the powers of the unconscious. We set up no power in opposition to the unconscious, and consequently we do not provoke it to attack.

In short, he who makes a victory and does not surrender it, becomes obsessed by the victory-idea, the illusion of himself as a great conqueror. This arouses conflict again, and he is if anything a little worse off than he was at the start. Indeed, there is no defeat like letting victory defeat you.

## THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

This brings us back to the ideal of the Bodhisattva, the answer of Mahayana Buddhism to the question, "Having attained Enlightenment, what then?" In the imagery of Buddhism the attainment of Nirvana consists in gradually liberating oneself from the ties of the world of life and death (*Samsara*). While there is any attachment to forms, any possession by the things of the world, man is drawn back to them again and again simply by the power of his own desire. Thus death is no release; it is only the exhaustion of the present physical instrument of that desire—the body. In time the desire creates for itself another body and so is reborn in the world to continue to work itself out. For to wish to possess the forms of the world is to be possessed by them, to be enthralled and bound as if by a magician's spell. Buddhism claims to be the way of release from that bondage, the severing of attachments, and in truth this is not a denial of life, but an affirmation of life by allowing it to live. For the desire to possess and keep for oneself the forms of the world is to kill them; they only live because they change and vanish. Therefore the sincere Buddhist is represented as one who, through countless lives, labours steadily to dissolve these attachments. After it may be "millions of aeons" he at last cuts the final bond and attains the threshold of Nirvana, the right to deliverance from rebirth, to enter into eternal rest and bliss. He "possesses nothing and is not possessed by anything"; he is free to do what he wills; he has, figuratively speaking, slain the magician who had enthralled him, the world of form, and now holds his *mana*. A Zen master was

## "CAST IT AWAY!"

asked, "What would you say to one who comes to you with nothing?" and the immediate reply was, "Cast it away!" This is precisely what the Bodhisattva must do when nothing holds him back to the world; he must cast away his attainment. Thus he is described as being presented on the threshold of Nirvana with a choice: either to enter into eternal bliss, or to surrender that right and offer it to "all sentient beings" for their welfare. The Bodhisattva is he who accepts the latter alternative, for he is said to vow that he will never accept the right which he has earned until the whole universe shares it with him; he prefers to return to the world and to labour again through another vast cycle of lives, undergoing all the pains to which human form is subject, in order that the whole Universe may be liberated. "Never will I seek nor receive private, individual salvation; never will I enter into final peace alone; but forever, and everywhere, will I live and strive for the redemption of every creature throughout the world."

Hence the Bodhisattvas are sometimes known as the "Buddhas of Compassion," and in this conception we must see, not the desire of humanity for loving gods to help it out of its difficulties, but the logical development of Buddhist philosophy—the discovery that Enlightenment is meaningless without Service. The Bodhisattva ideal is sometimes described as the revolt of the human soul against a purely cold and abstract philosophy, as if it were the effort of Eastern man to make the best of an inadequate religion. But this is as much beside the point

## THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

as to say that the softness of the fruit is a revolt against the hardness of the branch. Even so, it is a remarkable "best" that Eastern man has made of his religion, and it would be nearer the point to say that such a large fruit needs a particularly tough branch to bear it. For the great renunciation of the Bodhisattva is inconceivable unless preceded by the sternest discipline and the most absolute disregard of self. As yet it is almost impossible for us to imagine what the Bodhisattva's vow involves, for the ideal was brought forth by India in the maturity of her spiritual insight and it is not easy for us to understand the meaning of this sacrifice to those who for centuries had been accustomed to the idea of rebirth through immeasurable periods of time. What is more, whereas ordinary men forget their previous lives, the Bodhisattva remembers. If India's sages were not humbugs, and if their psychic knowledge is not pure self-deception, it is probable that men such as Nagarjuna, Asanga, Ashvaghosha and Santi-deva, the men who first understood the Bodhisattva ideal were those who were most aware of what rebirth involves. Such knowledge, however, is at present outside our scope, for we have no means of testing its truth. But the importance of the Bodhisattva ideal for us, in common with the other chief principles of Eastern philosophy, is that it can be applied at every stage of our development. For it is a principle which concerns not only those who have severed the last attachment to this world, but also those who live right in the midst of it. In the words of the Hermetic aphorism, "As above, so below," for the Bodhisattva's

## THE IDEAL OF NO PURPOSE

vow is only the right conduct of life "writ large" upon a cosmic scale.

Therefore so far as we are concerned the Bodhisattva ideal involves two things: what the *Bhagavad-Gita* describes as "renunciation of the fruit of action," and love for the world in all its aspects, or what has already been referred to as "acceptance of life." For just as he renounces Nirvana, just as he works on without any thought of the ultimate reward, so to those who are bound to the world this must imply action without thought of any lesser reward. In Taoism this is known as "purposelessness," as in the saying "the secret of life consists in using purpose to achieve purposelessness." For the Taoist would distinguish between purpose and meaning. To purpose he would give the narrower sense of merely personal or egoistic motive, whereas meaning can only be realized when there is so close a relationship between the ego and the world that the former no longer makes plans to outwit the latter. It has been said that the perfect act has no result, which is to say that, for the doer, the deed and its result are one, that the only result he seeks from his action is the action itself rightly performed. In mystical language this is known as "living in the eternal Now," as being detached from both past and future. As is said in the *Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*:

If we allow our thoughts, the past, the present and the future ones, to link up in a series, we put ourselves under restraint. On the other hand, if we let our mind attach to nothing at all times and towards all things, we gain emancipation.

("Tan-Ching," Trans. Wong Mou-lam.)

## THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

To return to the analogy of music, action with "purpose" is like making plans about the sixty-fourth bar when one is playing the fifteenth; the result is that the tune suffers, for to play correctly the mind must move with the tune. This is not the same thing as just "living in the present," which is to say, looking neither behind nor forward for fear of what may be seen. Rather it is the development of a certain poise which is ready for everything that comes. Thus in fencing, the moment one begins to think about the possible moves one's opponent may make, one's guard slackens and he has a chance to thrust home. The attention must never for a second wander from the movements of his sword, and one's own position must be relaxed and poised, ready to thrust or parry at any moment without having to overcome strain in an opposite direction. Hence the great Japanese fencing-master, Takuan, said :

When the hands are clapped, the sound issues without a moment's deliberation. The sound does not wait and think before it issues. There is no mediacy here; one movement follows another without being interrupted by one's conscious mind. If you are troubled and cogitate what to do, seeing the opponent about to strike you down, you give him room, that is, a happy chance for his deadly blow. Let your defence follow the attack without a moment's interruption, and there will be no two separate movements to be known as attack and defence.

This immediateness on your part will inevitably end in the opponent's self-defeat. It is like a boat smoothly gliding down the rapids; in Zen, and in fencing as well, a mind of no-hesitation, no-mediacy, is highly valued. So much reference is made in Zen to a flash of lightning or to sparks issuing from the impact of two flint-stones. If this is understood in the sense of quickness, a

## THE UNHURRIED LIGHTNING

grievous mistake is committed. The idea is to show immediateness of action, an uninterrupted movement of life-energy. Whenever room is left for interruption from a quarter not at all in vital relation with the occasion, you are sure to lose your own position. This of course does not mean to desire to do things rashly or in the quickest possible time. If there were this desire in you its very presence would be an interruption.

(*Trans. D. T. Suzuki.*)<sup>1</sup>

Thus the mind moves with the opponent's sword, with the music, with life, and right action depends less on plans for the future than on correct poise and full awareness in the present. Suzuki has said that Buddhism is a philosophy of time rather than space, and by this we must understand that it is a philosophy of keeping time. Or as Cranmer-Byng writes in his *Vision of Asia*: "It is rather the doctrine of the right opportunity, of acting on the inevitable hour, of striking the timely note that passes into harmony with others and produces a perfect chord."

Therefore the question of results, of purposes, of striving for a reward, does not enter here, for the highest form of action is spontaneous; past and future do not concern it, and when presented with opportunity in the present it acts so immediately that there is no room for motive or purpose to come between actor and action. But this spontaneity can only be achieved when there is considerable mental balance, for just as in fencing there can be no immediate action from an incorrect poise, so in life there can be no "purposelessness" unless the will is in accord with the Tao. That is to say, "purposeless" action is effected by a pure decision of will independent of motive,

<sup>1</sup> *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, III, p. 319.

## THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

and the decision is wise in proportion to the will's harmony with the Tao. In the same way, because of his accord with Christ, St. Paul was able to dispense with the Law, for when he acted, Christ acted. The will is thus set free from the struggle between stronger and weaker motives for its mastery, and for the first time free-will is attained in its fullness. This can only become effective when the Tao or Christ *is* our will, "whose service is perfect freedom." But before so great an accord between will and Tao is attained, the principle is to accept and respond to each opportunity as it comes, considering the effect of one's response upon others and renouncing any reward it may bring to oneself. But when accord between will and Tao has been achieved, there is no need to consider the effect on others, much less on oneself, for "Tao benefits all things and does not contest place with them"—in short, Tao is love. Therefore this first application of the Bodhisattva ideal cannot be understood without the second, his love for the world in all its aspects.

For the Bodhisattva has kinship, not only with gods and angels, but with demons, trees, grass and dust; all these are included in his vow. He is pictured as the saviour of the whole animate and inanimate universe, not only as the saviour of men, for it is said in one of the sutras, "Trees and grass—all these shall become Buddha," and again, "When every phase of mind is in accord with the mind of Buddha, there shall not be even one atom of dust that does not enter into Buddhahood." For us this must mean just the acceptance of the world in all its forms and aspects. In the words of the Zen poet Wu-men :

## THE LOUSE AND THE BUDDHA

Hundreds of spring flowers ; the autumnal moon :  
A refreshing summer breeze ; winter snow :  
Free thy mind of all idle thoughts,  
And for thee how enjoyable is every season.

This may seem just the sentimental love of Nature when she is pleasant, but, as a sharp contrast, here is a poem by the Japanese poet Ryokwan which arises from the same feeling :

O lice, lice,  
If you were the insects  
Singing in the autumn fields,  
My chest would really be  
For you the Mtsashino prairie.

In this there is a hint of that peculiar sense of humour which the Chinese and Japanese have found in Buddhist philosophy, for there is something delightfully incongruous in the thought of a louse being a potential Buddha, something which leads one to believe with Chesterton that there is a closer bond between cosmic and comic than the mere likeness of the words.

The point, however, is that the Bodhisattva regards nothing as unworthy of the Tao. He knows that

The highest goodness is like water. Water is beneficent to all things but does not contend. It stays in places which others despise. Therefore it is near to Tao.

(*" Tao Tê Ching,"* 8. *Trans. Ch'u Ta-ko.*)

Therefore just as the Tao "loves and nourishes all things but does not dominate over them," the Bodhisattva

## THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

accepts with reverence even the lowest of created things. In the East this attitude is sometimes carried to what we should consider absurd extremes : in Buddhist monasteries not even a rag is supposed to be cast carelessly aside, and a use is always found for what we should consider waste material. This attitude is also at the root of the curious and delightful Japanese custom of paying *kuyo* (Sk. *pūja*) or homage to a catch of fish, the weeds about to be removed from the garden, the enemies' dead lying on the battlefield and to all things animate and inanimate which benefit humanity at their own expense. But even if these outward signs of respect seem far-fetched to us, the attitude of grateful acceptance of the world, of life in all its stages—spring, summer, autumn, winter—is an essential characteristic of the Bodhisattva. Thus Santi-deva writes in his *Bodhicharyavatara* (V) that the Bodhisattva will be the disciple of all men, while Asanga says : " If another does harm to the Bodhisattva, he endures with patience the worst injuries with the idea that it is a benefit he has received. To think that the offender does one a service, that is to conduct oneself in accordance with the example of the Perfect Ones." It is perhaps here that we find the closest unity between Buddhism and Christianity, for this attitude of grateful acceptance of both good and evil is one of the most important factors in the Christian life. While the Buddhist regards all things that come to him as means of learning the Tao, as teachers of the Dharma, the Christian is thankful even for adversity, seeing in it a means of Grace sent from God. For in our ordinary life the Bodhisattva

## THE ANALOGY OF BREATH

is just one who is at home in the world, its pains causing him no rancour and its pleasures no corruption. In him the attitude of hostility and defensiveness which marks the spiritually diseased is altogether absent. Indeed, diseased is the right word, for even though he has difficulties greater perhaps than other men the Bodhisattva is fundamentally at ease. His attitude is relaxed and welcoming ; in Taoist imagery, he makes himself a vacuum so that the whole world is drawn to him, while what he empties from himself he offers freely and indiscriminately to all who come. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the East calm, deep and easy breathing is considered indispensable to meditation, for it is the physical analogy of the Bodhisattva's attitude to life. There is no gasping, no stoppage, no hostile sniffing, no withholding, for the breathing of those who are ill at ease with the world is always spasmodic and forced, and in sleep they lie tense and curled-up with the blanket over their heads. Thus in Buddhist and Taoist writings the sage is described as breathing "from the ankles" and sleeping "with legs fully stretched." Like Jesus,

he is found in company with wine-bibbers and butchers ; he and they are all converted into Buddhas. Bare-chested and bare-footed, he comes out into the market place ; daubed with mud and ashes, how broadly he smiles ! There is no need for the miraculous power of the gods, for he touches, and lo ! the dead trees are in full bloom.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From the commentary to the *Cowherding Pictures*, illustrating the "Ten Stages of Spiritual Cowherding," reproduced and translated by Dr. D. T. Suzuki in his *Manual of Zen Buddhism* (Kyoto, 1935), pp. 150-61.

## THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

But "acceptance," or even "grateful acceptance," is in fact too weak a term to describe the Bodhisattva's attitude to life. For acceptance is founded ultimately on love, and because the Bodhisattva loves the world the realization of the Tao is born between them. Indeed, the coldness of Buddhism is no more than superficial. There is a familiar proverb that cold hands mean a warm heart, and the secret of Buddhism is that though, to outward appearances, it seems to rise away from the world like some vast, hard and frozen mountain, yet, unseen to those who live on the surface, it penetrates downwards even farther to the burning centre of the earth. For the Buddha said :

As a mother, even at the risk of her own life, protects her son, her only son, so let the disciple cultivate love without measure towards all beings. Let him cultivate towards the whole world—above, below, around—a heart of love unstinted, unmixed with the sense of differing or opposing interests. Let a man maintain this mindfulness all the while he is awake. . . . This state of heart is the best in the world.

And again :

Just as whatsoever stars there be, their radiance avails not the sixteenth part of the radiance of the moon, that takes all those up into itself, outshining them in radiance and glory ; just as in the last month of the rains, at harvest time, the sun, mounting up on high into the clear and cloudless sky, overwhelms all darkness in the realms of space, and shines forth in radiance and glory ; just as in the night, when the dawn is breaking, the morning star shines out in radiance and glory : just so all the means that can be used as helps towards doing right avail not the sixteenth part of the emancipation of the heart through love.

## THE PROBLEM OF "HOW ?"

Yet here again we have to face the problem of "How ?" For it is of little use to make the command "love thy neighbour" a precept to be obeyed by a mere decision of the reason. One cannot learn how to love the world out of a text-book on religion any more than one can learn to love one's wife or husband out of a text-book on matrimony. It is another instance of "seek and find not," for love can no more be "forced" than Enlightenment. If we would know the Tao, the only means is to think of the Tao and not of ourselves trying to know it ; in the same way, if we would love the world, the only means is to think of the world and not of ourselves trying to love it. In this connection we may say the same thing of love which Zen says of Enlightenment—to him who knows nothing of the world, man and nature may seem beautiful and worthy of love ; when he knows a little of the world, man and nature reveal their evils, and beauty is seen to have its roots in filth ; but when he really knows the world, man and nature are once again beautiful and worthy of love. Only the very few can study the world long and intimately without being oppressed by its underlying ugliness, stupidity, pain and vanity, but the only cure for this despair is to follow one's study through until it comes out on the other side. A Zen master was asked, "What is the Tao ?" and answered simply, "Walk on !" For the only way to see the Tao in life, to love the world, just as to concentrate on a book, is to go on looking at it until, of a sudden, the whole thing comes. For in ourselves we have hidden away all the qualities of the

## THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

outside world, in some of us more deeply buried than in others. It may take long to appreciate the beauty of a certain picture or tune, but when, after continued looking or listening, its beauty suddenly appears, it has at last called out the kindred quality in ourselves. So also, if we see it as ugly, it is because of the kindred ugliness in ourselves. When this is understood we can truly say, *humani nihil a me alienum puto*. For we find that our own souls are, as it were, mirrors of the world and, conversely, that in looking intently at the world we see our own reflections, partly beautiful, partly ugly. Even then we have to go on looking at both until we can love the ugliness in both as well as the beauty. For there is just this difference between ugliness and sin : that whereas the ugliness of dirt is necessary for the beauty of the flower, sin is to put the flower in the dirt and the roots in the air. To love ugliness is to put it in its proper place, and then sin vanishes of itself. To put it in its proper place is to give it meaning, and the inverted plant is the absence of meaning. Now meaning is Tao, and while all other creatures live unconsciously in accord with it, man alone, having consciousness, sins through setting himself against it. For only man would or could plant a tree with its roots in the air. Thus man has rightly been called "that great orphan," but in time he will return to his Father, for "prodigal" would be a better word. But in the parable it was the prodigal for whom the fatted calf was slain, for only he who has sinned can know the full depth of his Father's love. Before one can unite, one must first separate ; before one

## ROOTS IN THE AIR

can know one's own face, one must first look in a mirror, and go on looking until it is understood that face and reflection are one ; before one can appreciate the Tao, one must first lose it. For the meaning means nothing to us until we know its value. "Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."

What is true of the Bodhisattva is true also of the Christ, if we read correctly the symbol of his life. For the Nativity is meaningless without the Crucifixion ; the Holy Child is an abomination unless he surrenders his lordship over the world. That is to say, when the Tao is brought to birth it is no Tao at all if it is considered as something apart from the world of opposites, as something, having which, we can claim superiority to that world. For if we discriminate between ordinary life and the Tao, we create simply another pair of conflicting opposites. Thus when we overcome the discord between ourselves and the external world, between pleasure and pain, life and death, good and evil, through the realization of the Tao, we must renounce our victory remembering that Tao

... acts without depending upon them (the things of the world),  
and raises without lording it over them.

When merits are accomplished it does not lay claim to them.  
Because it does not lay claim to them, therefore it does not lose them.

("Tao Tê Ching," 51. *Trans. Ch'u Ta-ko.*)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In other translations the last two sentences will be found at the end of Chapter II.

## THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

Therefore, although his Divine Incarnation gave him power over the world, to become a Messiah and found an earthly kingdom, Christ did not claim it. But because he surrendered kingship and accepted the death of a thief, his power became real, and this is the meaning of the Resurrection. Yet we must not understand his surrender of kingship simply as the surrender of dominion over the Jews, or even of the destiny of a Julius Caesar or an Alexander. For if we would grasp the full meaning, the "earthly kingdom" must mean more than that. The Buddhist who does not renounce his Nirvana becomes, in the deepest sense, an earthly king, for he has done no more than to claim victory over the world, to possess himself of its power, to become inflated with its *mana*. But in truth he has not overcome the world at all, for in claiming victory, victory has claimed him and involved him in the worst of all conflicts—the conflict between victor and vanquished. But Christ could only say, "I have overcome the world" because he was not its conqueror but its Saviour, and only the Bodhisattva has Nirvana because he does not make it in any way different from the world of life and death, because he renounces it for the salvation of all beings that live and die.

Therefore it may have seemed to many that God might have redeemed the world simply by the exercise of Divine magic, by entering into the souls of men by storm. But though this is the way of the King, it is not the way of the Saviour, for the Saviour redeems the world by accepting it, by loving it however great its evil.

## THE SUPREME PARADOX

For this reason Christ did not claim dominion ; he hallowed humanity by becoming human, and pain by suffering it in its keenest form. Thus the Cross which was once the symbol of contempt, of punished crime, has become the symbol of divinity, and in the Crucifix we may see two things : firstly, that the Divine Son accepts the whole of life, even the fate of malefactors, and secondly, that the living form of Tao, the Incarnate Word, is glorified by being spread and nailed upon the archaic symbol of the opposites. And over his head were placed the words : "*Jesus Natus Rex Iudaeorum*," to which the Jews objected, saying that he was not their king but only claimed to be. But the whole meaning of his life was that he renounced that claim, and whether or not Pilate knew this, whether he saw that Christ by renouncing kingship was truly king, or whether he wrote those words merely to show his contempt for the Jews, knowing or unknowing he stated the very truth and the supreme paradox. For by giving the highest title to the figure of the lowest wretch Pilate completed the symbol, and through stubborn contempt or deep insight refused any change, saying, "What I have written, I have written."

## CONCLUSION

TO write of the deepest principles of life is to be reminded always of a chain : if one link is raised all the others follow. For one cannot understand the things of the spirit by separating life into bits and pieces, and no part can be seen truly unless at the same time one has regard for the whole. As life is such a chain, so also are Christianity and the religions of the East. The Fall cannot well be thought of apart from the Incarnation and Crucifixion, while the pairs of opposites are likewise meaningless without the Tao which binds them. Therefore each chapter in this book has in some measure necessarily overlapped the others. To use the language of music, they have been less the distinct movements of a symphony than a number of variations on a theme, which is the Middle Way, the Tao, the Christ, the Meaning or the Reconciling Principle of reason and nature, good and evil, man and the universe, and of all those opposites upon which the movement of life depends. In order to grasp the problems occasioned by the conflict between these various opposites we have consulted the wisdom of the two great divisions of humanity—East and West. We have discussed Christianity, Psychology, Buddhism, Taoism and Vedanta in one another's terms. But our object was neither simply to compare, nor yet to prove that these seemingly different faiths are in fact one. In the union of man and woman which produces

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the child each remains different but, by reason of the child, is given greater meaning. In the same way our object has not been to discuss the wisdom of the East and the West separately, nor even to compare them standing in isolation. It has been to show how both may be transformed, not just by contact with one another, but by reason of the fruit of contact. In other words, it has been to bring them together and to think of each in the light of the meaning given to it by the results of that union.

But with those results we do not wish to try to found an altogether new philosophy, existing apart from the parent faiths. For the meaning is in no way apart from the opposites ; we speak of it as some new and third factor, but this may easily mislead if we do not understand that it exists in the opposites and cannot exist without them. Here we must be careful of our analogy of the child. The child may appear to be something new, and we may suppose that when it is born it is so much more important than the parents that they deserve our attention no longer. But we, who are Western and Eastern people, are the parents, and we cannot change our nature. As yet we have produced no child race which can take to itself the child philosophy ; but if we can conceive and bear this child philosophy, our task is not to substitute it for our own, but to nourish and tend it so that it gives new meaning to our own. The child depends on its father and mother, and it would not be helpful if its parents decided to be children themselves. But in watching over the child they must nevertheless

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become in some degree children themselves ; they must play the games of children and enter into the thoughts of children, and this without any feeling of superiority. What is important, however, is the way in which the care of the child transforms and gives new meaning to their own lives. That is to say, if we tried to make a new religion from a synthesis of Buddhism and Christianity, we should fail because our absorption in the synthesis would lead to neglect of the two vital supports on which it must stand. For we ourselves are those supports ; we cannot deny our traditions, and the forms and symbols of our native religions are deeply ingrained in our souls. Therefore we have not set out to compare East and West as one might compare the mental and physical peculiarities of woman with those of man. Nor has our object been to amalgamate the two ; it has been to find in this idea of the Middle Way a child which gives new meaning to each. We do not ask for a new Religion of the Middle Way ; we only ask that Westerners and Easterners should think of it, develop it and nurture it, and understand it in terms of their own traditions.

If, therefore, our ideas of Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism and Vedanta have erred somewhat from the orthodox path, the reason is that we have interpreted the meaning of each in the light of this Middle Way. Because this book has been written in the main for Western people, we must finally state in brief how an understanding of the Middle Way affects Christianity. But first we must say that among Christians this Way is not wholly new ; in the past many have seen its chief

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significance, which is that the Christian story from the Fall to the Resurrection is less important as history than as a symbol of what each must experience for himself. It is not easy to grasp this fully in the light of Christianity alone, and for this reason it is important that we should study religions which are psychological, which are ways of living rather than ways of belief. For we have to live the Christian story, and this is not done simply by remembering its events on the days of the year set apart for each. The task is not so much to think of the present meaning of what happened in the past, as to think of those past events as symbols of what is happening in the present. In this way the Fall becomes our own conflict with the world and the Incarnation becomes a symbol of mutual understanding between the two, of the ascent to a position from which we can see both the personal and the universal meaning of all that comes to us. And lest we should imagine that this ascent has made us into gods, into superior beings who have mastered the world and broken its spell, the Crucifixion becomes the symbol of our acceptance of all those conflicts and pains, of our renunciation of divinity. For by this means we find that divinity does not consist in our attitude to life but in life itself. Thus the Incarnation is the birth of this new attitude and the Crucifixion the understanding that it is no cause for pride. For God is no God if He stays in His high heaven and separates Himself from the worms and the dust.

But the East does not only help us in understanding our symbols. It has something further to offer which

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is really beyond symbols. We devoted a chapter to Zen, and it seems that this is a subject which must be approached in a different way from any other Eastern cult. For it is not specifically Eastern and it does not use the alien terms and forms of exotic faiths but the language of ordinary life. In substance it appears to be the pure religious experience apart from any creed, and in form the pure everyday experience common to all men apart from any nation or race. As the supreme vision of the mystic which no words can describe, Zen is found all over the world. But as a specific cult it comes nearer than any other to the bedrock of religion, because it points uncompromisingly to our ordinary experience of life, telling us to find there what others seek in the distant realms of philosophy and symbolism. Ideas and symbols are necessary, for their study is like the Prodigal's journey into a far country. In the end we return to the home from which we started, but it comes before our eyes in a new light, and Zen is just this returning home. It begins where philosophy ends, just as historically it represents the fulfilment of Buddhism. To avoid any prejudice or misunderstanding it is best to remove it from its Chinese associations, to forget the label "Zen," to return to our own religions and consider this: that between the greatest height of spirituality and the most ordinary things of the world there is no division. We shall study every philosophy, search through all the scriptures, consult every teacher and practise all spiritual exercises until our minds are swollen with the whole wisdom of the world. But in the end we shall return

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to the surprising fact that we walk, eat, sleep, feel and breathe, that whether we are deep in thought or idly passing the time of day, we are alive. And when we can know just that to be the supreme experience of religion we shall know the final secret and join in the laughter of the gods. For the gods are laughing at themselves.



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## GLOSSARY

*Abbreviations :* Ch. Chinese ; J. Japanese ; P. Pali ; Sk. Sanskrit.

**Advaita** (Sk.) : "Not two." The basic principle of Vedanta, i.e. that there is only one ultimate Reality. Although in appearance the universe is dualistic, made up of conflicting opposites (*dvandva*), and though we discriminate between ourselves and the universe, the two are in fact one. This doctrine is contained in the saying, *Tat tvam asi*—"That (the One) art thou"—for the individual is understood not just as a part of the one Reality (Brahman) but as Brahman in its entirety.

**Anatta** (P.) : "No-self." This is one of the "Three Signs of Being" in Buddhism (*v.* Anicca and Dukkha). It means that no individual thing exists as a thing-in-itself, as a complete and autonomous entity apart from the rest of the universe. Thus man has no soul which is an eternal and separate reality. His soul is his "meaning," and if man is considered by himself this does not exist.

**Anicca** (P.) : "Not-permanent." Another of the Buddhist "Three Signs of Being." Its meaning is that no individual thing preserves its form for ever ; forms only exist because they are in a continuous state of change.

**Arhat** (Sk.), **Arhan** (P.) : The perfect man in Buddhism. He who has followed the Path to its end and has attained the state of Nirvana (*q.v.*).

**Artha** (Sk.) : The duties of citizenship—establishing a family, gaining a position in the world, and in every way "rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." This term is used in the Code of Manu to designate one of the three functions of man's life. (*v.* Kama and Dharma.)

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**Atman** (Sk.) : The Self, the Spirit, in man and all created things which is one with Brahman, the universal Self (q.v.), in its entirety.

**Atta** (P.) : As used in Buddhism this must be translated "the thing-in-itself," the individual considered as a real, self-existent and eternal entity. (v. *Anatta*.)

**Avatar** (Sk.) : A Hindu term for the earthly incarnation of Vishnu, that aspect of God which preserves the universe, as distinct from Brahma the Creator, and Shiva the Destroyer. These incarnations (e.g. Rama and Krishna) appear on earth from time to time to teach mankind the Law of life.

**Avidya** (Sk.), **Avijja** (P.) : "Not-knowledge" or Ignorance. The condition which creates our bondage to the world of life and death (*Samsara*, q.v.), which involves us in the conflict of the opposites. This bondage is the result of not understanding the true nature of the opposites. (v. *Advaita*.)

**Bhagavad-Gita** (Sk.) : "The Song of the Lord." A portion of the sixth book of the *Mahabharata*, generally ascribed to the Second Century B.C. The *Gita* consists of a number of poetical discourses put into the mouth of Krishna, exhorting Arjuna on the field of battle. This is perhaps not only the most popular but the most remarkable text of Indian mysticism. (See Bibliography, *Vedanta* (Texts).)

**Bhakti** (Sk.) : Devotion. One of the three forms of Yoga (q.v.).

**Bodhisattva** (Sk.) : One whose essence (*sattva*) is Enlightenment (*Bodhi*). This term is used in Mahayana Buddhism to describe one of the manifestations of a Buddha in the world of form. For a Buddha does not retire into the ultimate bliss of Nirvana, shutting himself away from the rest of creation for all eternity. He renounces this eternal

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peace, and appears in the form of a Bodhisattva in order that he may help every living creature to attain Enlightenment.

**Brahman** (Sk.) : From the Sk. root *Brñh-*, "Breath." The world of opposites, night and day, rest and activity, *pralaya* and *manvantara*, is described as the inbreathing and outbreathing of Brahman, the Self-existent. Brahman corresponds in some ways to the Absolute of Subjective Idealism, the One Reality of which all separate things are appearances. (v. Advaita.)

**Buddha** (Sk.) : "An Enlightened One." The name is usually applied to Gautama Siddhartha, sage of the Sakya clan, a prince of royal birth, who lived between 600 and 500 B.C. He was the founder of the Buddhist religion, but in Mahayana Buddhism he is seen as one of many Buddhas who appear on earth from time to time in order that the knowledge of the Law may never perish. *Buddha* is really a title and not a name, and sometimes it is used to designate the principle rather than the person, i.e. the absolute Essence, Reality or Meaning of the Universe. Hence the saying, "All is Buddha." Thus Buddhahood is an attainment which may be reached by all, and a Buddha is not so much what the West understands as a God, but a man who through countless lives has reached the fulfilment of human destiny.

**Chuang Tzu** (Ch.) : One of the three principal sages of Taoism, the other two being Lao Tzu, its founder (q.v.), and Lieh Tzu. His date is about 330 B.C., and the writings ascribed to him (in which there are many interpolations) develop the principles of the laconic *Tao Tê Ching* (q.v.) with a wealth of anecdote and analogy which is both subtle and humorous. (v. Bibliography, Taoism.)

**Dharma** (Sk.), **Dhamma** (P.) : This word has many shades of meaning. The nearest English equivalent is "Law," and its three main senses are: the fundamental

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Law or Meaning upon which all the processes of life are based, the way in which the universe works; the Law or Teaching of the Buddha; as applied to each individual thing, its function, the law of its being, or its meaning. It also denotes one of the three stages or functions of man's life as described in the Code of Manu, i.e. the latter part of life when man devotes himself to the things of the spirit. (v. Artha and Kama.)

**Dhyana** (Sk.), **Jhana** (P.): In Yoga (q.v.) this signifies a particular state of consciousness attained in profound meditation. It may generally be described as the union of subject and object in concentration. i.e. When one has concentrated on a given object for a considerable time, there prevails a union between oneself and that object. This in turn gives way to *samadhi* (q.v.). In Buddhism four Jhanas are enumerated, being the four states of consciousness to be attained before reaching the final Nirvana (q.v.).

**Dukkha** (P.): Another of the Buddhist "Three Signs of Being" (v. Anatta and Anicca). The usual translation is "suffering," but this is too narrow, for it involves not only physical and mental pain but any sort of discord. The saying *sabbe sankhara dukkha*—"All compounds are *dukkha*"—does not mean that they are suffering pain so much as that, through ignorance, they are involved in the conflict of opposites.

**Gnana** (Sk.): The intellectual aspect of knowledge or wisdom. One of the three forms of Yoga (q.v.).

**Hinayana** (Sk.): "The Little Vehicle"—i.e. the lesser means of bringing man to Enlightenment. A term coined by the followers of the Mahayana (Great Vehicle, q.v.) to describe those who acknowledge only the version of the Buddha's teaching recorded in the Pali scriptures. This version is said to be nearer to the original teaching of the Buddha than the more elaborate Sanskrit scriptures. By

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its own followers the Hinayana is known as the Theravada (P.) or "Way of the Elders." It is now found in Ceylon, Burma and Siam.

**Kaivalya (Sk.)** : Used by Patanjali (q.v.) in his *Yoga Sutra* to describe the state of complete spiritual freedom from the world of form and the conflict of the opposites.

**Kali (Sk.)** : The bride of Shiva, the Destroying aspect of God (Hinduism). Is said to take delight in destruction, being the absolute female (i.e. negative) principle. In various cults she is worshipped with debased orgies in which human sacrifice is often used. The victims often come of their own wish, desiring only complete annihilation.

**Kama (Sk.)** : Passion, the emotional nature, or the art of pleasing the senses. One of the three functions of man in the Code of Manu.

**Karma (Sk.)** : "Action." Used also to mean "destiny," as in, "It is my karma that this has happened to me," or in other words, "It is my own doing." Both in Vedanta and Buddhism, all that happens to us comes by reason of our own condition. We attract certain circumstances to ourselves by reason of what we are, by reason of the results of past actions and thoughts. The term also denotes another of the three forms of Yoga (q.v.).

**Lao Tzu (Ch.)** : "Young-Old" or "The Old Boy," the founder of Taoism, said to have lived c. 600 B.C. and to have written the *Tao Tê Ching* (q.v.). Some authorities hold that he is only a legendary figure, and Waley believes that his name was only associated with the *Tao Tê Ching* after the Second Century B.C. Usually represented in art as riding on a water-buffalo, one of the fiercest animals, which his calm spirit has tamed.

**Mahayana (Sk.)** : "The Great Vehicle." The form of Buddhism now found in China, Japan, Tibet, Mongolia and Korea, flourishing in a great variety of sects. Originally

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based on the Sanskrit version of the Buddha's teaching, its chief early exponents were Ashvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Asanga, Vasubandhu and Santi-deva. It comprises many doctrines which, though not found in early Buddhism, are the logical development of the Buddha's original teaching. The most important of these are the Bodhisattva doctrine (q.v.) and the Trikaya, the Trinity, or the Three Bodies of the Buddha.

**Maya (Sk.):** Illusion. The false view of the world obtained as a result of *avidya* (q.v.).

**Neti, neti (Sk.):** "Not this, not this . . ." The formula describing the negative way of approach to the ultimate Reality, i.e. denying Reality as any *particular* form. (v. *Sunyata*.)

**Nirvana (Sk.), Nibbana (P.):** The "waning out" of the flame of *trishna* (q.v.), of selfish craving, which results in liberation from the conflict of the opposites. Nirvana is a negative term, but the Buddhist scriptures describe it positively as a state of absolute freedom, calm and bliss.

**Patanjali (Sk.):** The author of the *Yoga Sutra*, a collection of terse aphorisms on Yoga practice (q.v.), divided into four books. He is sometimes regarded as the founder of Yoga, but Yoga existed long before his time (Second Century B.C.), and it is probable that he was the first to collect and arrange its principles in literary form.

**Purusha (Sk.):** The Soul or Self which is the Seer, the Spectator, in all actions, thoughts and emotions, without being itself involved therein. Ignorance, says Patanjali, is the result of identifying the Seer (*Purusha*) with the instruments of seeing—the mind, the body and the senses which together comprise the physical personality.

**Sakayaditthi (P.):** The heresy of separateness. The idea of the soul as a self-existent reality, separate from the rest of the universe. (v. *Anatta*, *Atta* and *Atman*.)

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**Samadhi** (Sk.) : The state of consciousness achieved in meditation which follows after *dhyana* (q.v.). If *dhyana* is the union of subject and object, *samadhi* is the state in which subject and object are forgotten and only the meaning which relates them remains. Various grades of *samadhi* are mentioned in the books of both Yoga and Buddhism.

**Samurai** (J.) : The warrior of feudal Japan. They were the retainers of the various *daimyo* (feudal lords). For an account of their code of honour (*bushido*) and their connection with Zen in its influence on *judo*, *kendo* and other military arts, see E. J. Harrison's *Fighting Spirit of Japan* (London, 1913), Nukariya's *Religion of the Samurai* (London, 1913) and A. W. Watts's *Spirit of Zen* (London, 1936).

**Sangsara** (Sk.) : The world of opposites, the alternation of birth and death, sometimes known as the Wheel of Life (*Bhavachakra*). *Sangsara* is the pairs of opposites considered apart from the meaning which relates them, i.e. the opposites in conflict. As this conflict is illusion (*maya*), *Sangsara* is in fact *Nirvana*, and to understand this is to attain liberation.

**Sanyassin** (Sk.) : A homeless seeker of Enlightenment.

**Satori** (J.) : The term used in Zen for the sudden flash of Enlightenment which sometimes follows prolonged concentration on some problem (*ko-an*). *Satori*, however, comes at other times as well, and many instances are recorded of *satori* resulting from one of those curious answers to questions (*mondo*) with which Zen literature abounds. Examples in Chapter IV.

**Sunyata** (Sk.) : "Emptiness." The negative way of describing the ultimate Reality. It is called Emptiness or No-thingness because it is not any *particular* thing or form. When it is understood that no individual exists as a thing-in-itself, then the whole universe is seen as empty of self-existent things. But this is not a denial of the universe, for to say that *Sunyata* is No-thing is to say that it is All-things,

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or rather that it is the meaning, the relationship between the whole and the parts, neither of which exists without it.

**Sutra** (Sk.), **Sutta** (P.): A sacred scripture. In Buddhism the term is generally applied to the recorded words of the Buddha. In Vedanta and other Indian systems it is applied to the works of outstanding sages, while commentaries on these *sutras* are known as *sastras*.

**Tantra** (Sk.): A "web" or "warp," hence a continuous series and hence a rule or ritual. *Tantra* is found in both Hinduism and Buddhism, and though its forms are many, it is concerned mainly with the sexual aspect of religion. There are exalted and debased forms, and all make use of magical and symbolic rites and practices relating to the generative principle.

**Tao** (Ch.): Originally *Tao* meant "speech." Thus the first line of the *Tao Tê Ching* reads: "The *Tao* that can be *tao*-ed is not the eternal *Tao*." Many translations have been suggested—the Way, God, Reason, the Logos, the Law, the Spirit. These fail because the *Tao* contains a multiplicity of ideas. Wilhelm has translated it as "Meaning" and perhaps this is the nearest we can come. Like *Dharma* (q.v.), *Tao* is used in three main senses: as the Meaning or Way of the universe; as the art and science of Taoism, as following the Way; as the meaning, function or way of any particular thing.

**Tao Tê Ching** (Ch.): "The Book of Tao and Te." This is perhaps the greatest of all the mystical books of China, not only because of its profundity but also because of its manner. It is laconic, witty and humorous, and the writer had a most remarkable sense of analogy and insight into natural phenomena. The work is usually ascribed to Lao Tzu (q.v.), although Waley gives its date as about 240 B.C. There is no particular sequence of thought running through it; rather it is a series of aphorisms and observations

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written down from time to time without any attempt at logical arrangement. (v. Bibliography, Taoism.)

**Tê (Ch.)**: Like *Tao*, *Tê* is untranslatable. The usual rendering is "virtue," but it should not be understood as mere observance of the moral law, for Taoism has no moral law. Rather it is the *Tao* working in man, and the man of *Tê* is he who has realized *Tao* in his way of living.

**Trishna (Sk.), Tanha (P.)**: "Thirst." Although the usual rendering is "desire," this is too wide a term, for *trishna* is a particular kind of desire: viz.—the desire to hold on to oneself or any other changing form as an *atta* or thing-in-itself. It resists change, because change removes things from our grasp, and hence it is a denial of life. For things cannot live unless they change, and cannot even exist if they are isolated from the universe. Thus *trishna* is the desire to isolate and possess certain objects for oneself, the chief of these being one's own person.

**Wu-wei (Ch.)**: "Non-action" or "non-assertion." This should not be understood as doing nothing, for it is the principle of overcoming the world by acceptance, by yielding oneself. It is a Taoist term describing the principle of victory by gentleness exemplified in *judo* or *ju-jitsu*, whereby the opponent is defeated by yielding to him and using his own strength to bring about his downfall. Thus water cannot be cut, however much it yields to the knife; in fact, it is invulnerable *because* it yields.

**Yajñavalkya (Sk.)**: A name which occurs in some of the principal Upanishads as the teacher whose doctrine they record. Nothing is known of him outside the Upanishads, but Geden writes, "If the name represents a real individuality, and is not merely a title under whose shelter many convergent thoughts and reasonings have found expression, Yajñavalkya may claim a place with the greatest thinkers of the world or of any age."

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**Yin and Yang** (Ch.) The female and male, dark and light, negative and positive principles. A Taoist term for the two aspects of the Tao.

**Yoga** (Sk.) : Literally a yoke or discipline. Sometimes said to be called a yoke because it is the method of joining man and the universe. There are three basic forms of Yoga — *Gnana*, *Bhakti* and *Karma*, Thought, Devotion and Action, being the three main ways of approach to Enlightenment. *Raja Yoga* is an eclectic form comprising not only these three, but a fourth, *Hatha Yoga*, which consists of various neuro-physical exercises. The chief treatise on *Raja Yoga* is Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, while a further exposition is found in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (q.v.). The object of Yoga technique is to discriminate between the real Self (Atman or Purusha, q.v.) and the false self. The latter is the personality, composed of body, mind and senses, with its three qualities (*gunas*) of energy, inertia and balance. The former, the real Self, uses the false as its instrument, and if the instrument is to be employed aright, it should not be identified with the user.

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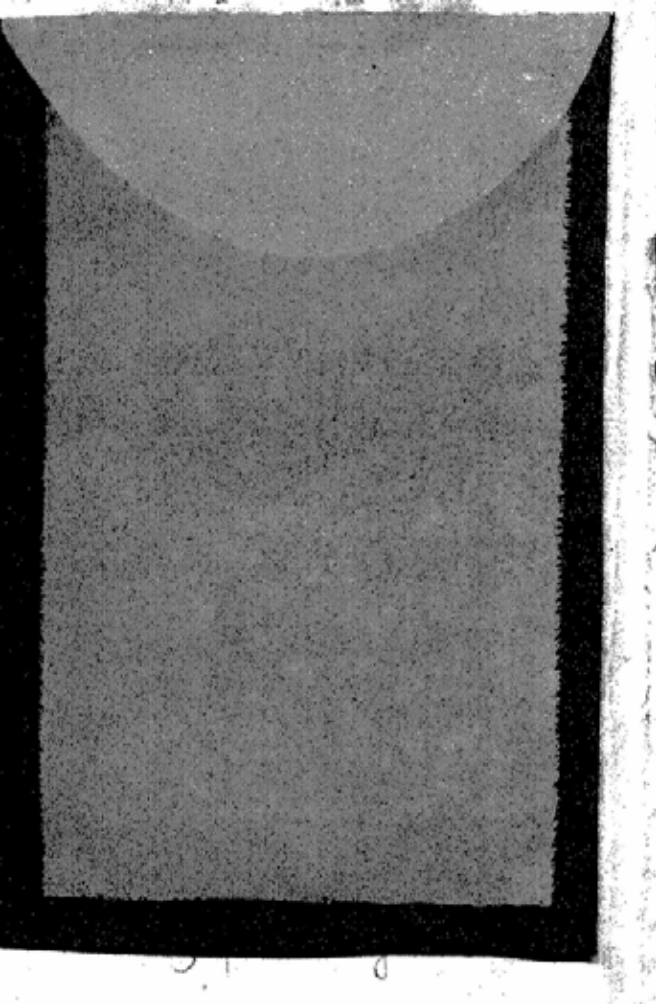
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